

# A D E F E N S E

## Against the Temptation to SELF-MURTHUR.

Wherein the Criminal *Nature* and *Guilt* of it are display'd: The various *Pretenses* for it are examin'd and answer'd: Seasonable *Advice* is proposed to those who are Tempted, and to those who have been deliver'd from this Temptation.

Together with

Some Reflections on *Excess in Strong Liquors, Duelling*, and other Practices akin to this heinous Sin.

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By *I. WATTS.* *R*

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Thou shalt not Kill. *Exod. xx. 13.*

*Vetat enim dominans ille in nobis Deus injussu suo nos hinc demigrare. Cicero in Tusc. Quæst. Lib. I.*

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L O N D O N:

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D E F E N S E

SHELMURTHUR.





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T H E

P R E F A C E.

**I**T can be of no Importance to the World to know the particular Occasion of this Composure. 'Tis sufficient to say, That the rude Draughts and Sketches of it thrown into the form of a Letter have been so far honour'd by divine Grace, as to save a Soul from perishing.

The numerous *Self-Murthers* which we read in our Papers of Weekly News, inform us that the Tempter is not asleep. The

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last

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last general Bill of Mortality tells us of 59 who are known to have *destroyed themselves* the Year past; besides 74 who were *drowned*, and 43 who were said to be *found Dead*: Now among these 117 who can tell how many might be necessary also to their own Death, tho' surviving Relatives might conceal it from the Notice of the Publick? This very Week I have read four more. Such numbers of these tragical Events are a very unhappy, yet a sensible Argument that *Satan* the cruel Adversary *walks about* through every Street of this great City *as a roaring Lyon seeking whom he may devour*. 'Tis the Design of this little Treatise to discover the infinite

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finite Mischief of his Temptations, and to teach Mankind how they may resist him and defeat his fatal Purposes.

I grant that the sceptical Humour and growing Atheism of the Age, with the Disbelief of a future State and of all the Terrors of another World, are the profane and deadly Principles which influence some of these unnatural and murderous Practices. But profest Atheism and Infidelity are not the only Causes. *Suicide* is often owing to the shameful Neglect of all Religion even by those who pretend to believe it, and to their strange thoughtlessness of God and Heaven and Hell. The wild and ungovern'd

Lusts and Passions of Mankind, their secret criminal Practices and shameful Iniquities that are afraid of the Light, the frequent Crosses and Calamities of this Life, the raging Impatience of Mind under Disappointments, with a certain Horror of Poverty and Contempt and Shame, hurry on foolish and guilty Creatures to hide themselves in Death and the Grave. Besides all this, the dark and sullen Complexion and the gloomy Melancholy of some Persons, their inward Uneasiness, their Jealousies, and fretful Disposition, are such unhappy Circumstances as a subtil Devil improves for his own pernicious Designs. These are the fatal Springs  
of



of such tragical Events in our Day: These are the dismal Seeds of many a bloody Harvest, which the great Enemy of God and Man reaps daily amongst us.

May the blessed *Spirit of God* lift up a *Standard* against the Destroyer, and make these Papers useful to support, defend and relieve those poor deluded Creatures, who are worried by his Rage and ensnar'd by his Devices! And in the Day of the Lord, when every secret thing shall be revealed, may this Discourse appear to have been a success-ful, tho' an humble, Instrument in the Hand of the Spirit of God for the Deliverance and Salvation of those who have been tempted, and for the  
Rescue

Rescue of many a Soul from present Death and everlasting Burnings.

I had some Thoughts of adding a few Pages at the End of this Book concerning a *melancholy Temper of Mind*, whether it arise from the Disorders of animal Nature, or from an uneasy set of Thoughts relating to this World or the next. But when I came to review what Mr. *Timothy Rogers* had written on that Subject, and the little Discourse that Mr. *Clifford* had collected out of the Writings of the late eminent Mr. *Richard Baxter*, which was recommended by several Ministers, I found it needless for me to attempt any thing further. In those Treatises  
the

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the Reader will meet with so particular an Account of the Nature of this Affliction, of the Causes of it, and of the Methods of Relief, as may be render'd very serviceable through the Blessing of Heaven to those who are thus afflicted, or to their Friends about them who are concern'd for their Welfare. And may these Methods prove happily successful for their Relief! that by the Divine Aids of Providence and Grace they may be preserved from so dismal and mournful a Death, wherein surviving Friends can find little Comfort or Hope, but what arises from the former Religious Life of those unhappy Creatures, and the apparent Symptoms of present Distraction. Tho'

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Tho' such Themes as these are not a very delightful Entertainment either to him that writes or reads, yet the calamitous and wretched Circumstances both of Flesh and Spirit in this feeble and dangerous State of Frailty, Sin and Temptation, make such Discourses necessary at some Seasons to prevent the Ruin of Mankind. O blessed State of Souls in the upper World who are released from this Body of Sin and Death, and enjoy a glorious and sublime Security from all the mischievous Influences of the Tempter! Tho' we dare not cut the Thread of our own Lives, nor fly from our present State of Trial till our Creator appoint the Day of our Deliverance,



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ance, 'tis yet our Duty and our Interest to get our Souls weaned daily from all the Scenes of this lower World, since we know we must shortly leave them. Let us labour cheerfully here on Earth in the various Services of God and Men, but with our Spirits so attemper'd to the Business and the Blessedness of Heaven, that we may as cheerfully obey the divine Summons, and pass the important Hour of Death with Holy Serenity and Triumph. *Amen.*

*London,* January the  
28th 1725-6.

THE

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A

# DEFENCE

Against the Temptation to

## SELF-MURDER.

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### S E C T. I.

*The Unlawfulness of it display'd.*

**W**HEN an Atheist is tempted to destroy himself, he has no Concern whether it be lawful or no, for he knows of no Law nor Power that can reach to punish him. Such a Wretch doth not believe there is any other World to receive him when he dies out of this, nor any God

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there

there to call him to account. He supposes his Soul vanishes into Air, and his Dust is safe from Vengeance. These are the Sentiments of Atheism; and vile and irrational as they are, yet they are the only Principles that can give any tolerable Colour or Pretence for *Self-Murther*.

But if a Man believes there is a God that made him, if he believes his Soul is immortal, and that his Creator has ordain'd it to dwell in a human Body for a Season, and to pass a State of Probation there in order to eternal Reward or Punishment, surely this Man must confess himself accountable to God hereafter for all his Conduct here: And one would think such a Person should never doubt whether the Destruction of his Body by his own Hands and the wilful Dismission of his Soul were a Crime or no. Especially if he professes to believe his Bible, one would wonder he could ever imagine it an innocent thing for him to do Violence  
to



Sect. I.      *of Self-Murther.*

to himself and to shed his own Blood. But the Follies of Mankind are amazing, and the strange Turns of Thought under the deceitful Impressions of the Tempter are unaccountable. Poor deluded Creatures are first tempted to hope that they shall put an End to their present Sorrows by a wilful Death, then they wink their Eyes against the glaring Guilt of it, and try to persuade themselves that 'tis no Sin.

Some Persons have been so hardy as to reason upon this Point, and to argue that *Self-Murther* has nothing criminal in it. Strange, that *Hell* and *Destruction* should have Advocates among the Sons of Men! that *Death* should have such Accomplices in the Land of the Living! But since it has been so, let us plead against them in the Name of the living God; let us try whether we cannot by the Force of Reasoning drawn from the Word of God, as well as from the Light of Nature, make it appear with

bright Evidence, that *Suicide* or *Self-Destruction* is prohibited by the Divine Law, both *natural* and *reveal'd*; that it includes aggravated Guilt in the Nature of it; and consequently that the Person who dares commit this Crime, stands exposed to severe and terrible Punishments in the invisible World.

I. Consider that the *great God, the Maker of all Things, has assum'd to himself the Power and Lordship of Life and Death*; "I kill, and I make alive. *Deut.* xxxii. 39. 'Tis he sends us into this World, and he expects that we should wait his Will to send us out of it. Has not our Creator formed us with infinite Wisdom, and placed us by Providence to act our Parts, maintain our Posts, and fulfil some Service for him in this part of his Dominions? Has he not a Right to determine the Time of our Continuance here, and the Moment of our Removal? Is it not an Invasion of that Divine Right and Prerogative, if we will appoint the Time for our selves without

Sect. I. *of Self-Murther.* 3

without his Order, and contrary to the Rules he has given us for our Government? Where is his Licence for any Man to dismiss himself? A Spirit, who is ordain'd to dwell in Flesh, what Warrant has he to destroy that Flesh at his own Pleasure, to quit his appointed Station in this visible World, and to force his Way into God's invisible Dominions before he obtain the Leave of his Maker? Or dares he do this at a Venture according to his own capricious Humour without a Warrant from on high?

Can a *Soldier* who is fixt in his Post (tho' it rain and blow at Midnight) forsake his Guard before his General permit? Can such a faithless Centinel expect any thing but Frowns and Death from the General? Is it Excuse enough to say, "*I broke the Orders of my Superior because it rain'd?*" What a piece of shameful Cowardise is this? And dares a Soul that is placed by its Creator to act in a human Body dis-

miss it self and fly from its appointed Station, as far as the Distance of two Worlds, and yet hope for Approbation? Dares such a Soul run from its Post, into the immediate Presence of its Sovereign Lord in the World of Spirits, and say, "*I have fled from my Post because I found it troublesome, I've done it indeed without Leave, and yet I expect a Reward?*" May not such a Wretch rather justly expect to be banish'd for ever from the Presence of his Maker, and be doom'd to suffer eternal Penalties without Mercy and without Hope?

Perhaps you will tell me, "*There's no Want of Courage discovered in Self-Murder: And that it was not accounted Cowardise but a noble Instance of Fortitude in many of the Heathen Heroes, who put an End to their Lives with their own Hands on various Occasions.*"

*Answe.*



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*Ans<sup>w</sup>.* Concerning the *Heathens* who destroyed themselves I shall speak in another Place. 'Tis enough at present to say this, that whatsoever degrees of *Courage* a mistaken Fancy may ascribe to those Ancients, I must confess I am of a very different Opinion concerning the *Suicides* in our Day: The Attribution of any Honour to a *Self-Murtherer* has but little Reason or Justice in it, at any time when 'tis thoroughly examin'd: And perhaps such a bare Supposition may administer too much Fuel to so dreadful a Temptation, rather than quench the Sparks of it.

'Tis evident to me that the uneasy and impatient Man has not *Courage* enough to bear the Arrows of adverse Providence; he has not Firmness of Mind sufficient to stand the Shock of Sickness or Pain; or perhaps his Heart has not Resolution enough to endure the Thoughts of Poverty or Contempt; he is frightened at the Sounds of Reproach

and Infamy ; he turns his Back and flies from the Scene of Battle, when Poverty or Shame stare him in the Face : Or perhaps the meer imaginary Terrors which himself has rais'd, put him to Flight ; and because he can't get far enough from them in this World, he throws himself headlong from the Stage of Life, and leaps into the World of Spirits.

Now if there be any Point of *Courage* in this Practice, 'tis an impious and diabolical one : 'Tis a rushing into the Presence of an Almighty and dreadful God, to tell him Face to Face, that *you have quitted the Station he hath appointed you, that you have broken his Commission, you have disobey'd his Orders, and you expect his Sentence for Eternity.* This is tremendous Courage indeed ; an outrageous Fit of impious Rashness ! All the rest is meer Weakness of Mind ; 'Tis egregious Cowardise mingled with extreme Folly.

II. Con-

II. Consider the *express Prohibitions of Murther in the Word of God*, and the *frequent occasional and severe Denunciations of God's Wrath against Murtherers in various parts of Scripture.*

The *sixth Command* offers it self with bright Evidence to this Service, *Exod. xx. 13. Thou shalt not kill, or Thou shalt do no Murther, i. e. Thou shalt not take away the Life of Man.*

You will say, "I may have Power  
" and Right to take away my own  
" Life, tho' I must not take away my  
" Neighbour's.

I answer, 1. The Command is express'd in general Terms, which include both our *selves* and our *Neighbours*: Now there is no subsequent Limitation of it only to our *Neighbour* either in the Word of God, or in the Reason of Things; and who has given you Authority to limit it?

The rest of the Commands of the second Table which are capable of being referr'd to *our selves*, do as much exclude the same Practices *against our selves* as *against our Neighbours.*

*bours.* I must not *commit Adultery with another Person*, nor must I *defile my self with Adultery*. I must not *bear false Witness* against my *Neighbour*, nor must I *speak a false Thing* about or against my *self*. I must *honour my own Parents*, and by the same Reason, if I am a Parent, I must not do any thing to *dishonour my own Person or parental Character* in the sight of Children. Now since our *selves* as well as our *Neighbours* are taken into Consideration in all these Commands, where-soever it is possible in the Nature of the thing, I think the *Destruction of our selves* as well as of *our Neighbours* is equally forbidden by the *sixth Command*.

Thus this Law secures the Life of every Man, Woman and Child in the World, who have not forfeited their Lives to the publick Justice by some capital Crime: And even then 'tis only the Publick Officer, or the Person authorized by the Law



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Law of the Land, who has right to take away the Life of the Criminal.

*Secondly*, I answer, The *Injury* forbidden in the *sixth Command* does not only reach to the *Person who is slain*, but to his *Friends*, his *Relations*, his *Country*, and the *Community* to which he belongs. 'Tis upon this Account chiefly that human Penalties are annexed to Murther by Men, because the Community is hereby deprived of a Member, or the Prince of a Subject, and the various parts of that Community are deprived of a Helper. 'Tis also upon this Account of the *Injury done to our Fellow Creatures*, that God has appointed Blood to be repaid with Blood, as he is the sovereign Guardian of human Society.

Now I would ask, Whether the same Injury is not done to our Friends, our Kindred and our Country, if we murder our selves as if another Hand murder'd us? Yes surely, and in some Respects a greater Injury too, especially

ally to our Friends, as shall appear hereafter.

But besides all this, the *Injury reaches to God our Creator* ; 'tis he has appointed to each Person his Station in this World for some special Service to himself as well as to our Fellow Creatures. And as another Man must not injure and affront our Creator by removing us from this Station, so neither must we do it our selves.

'Tis not for any Man to say, “ I  
 “ can be of no Service to God or Man  
 “ in this World; I am rather a Bur-  
 “ den to the Earth, a Piece of useless  
 “ Lumber; therefore I throw my self  
 “ out of the Way.” But can you  
 tell for what Services God has reserved  
 you? Are you one of his Council?  
 Do you know what future Events may  
 arise, wherein you may be made use  
 of, if not in an *active* Manner, yet at  
 least in a *passive* Way, to carry on some  
 part of the divine Scheme of Provi-  
 dence? Now for this Reason no sort of  
 Murther is permitted, that so no Man  
 may

may be cut off from all future and possible Capacities of Service to God or his Fellow Creatures. God has not made any Man a Judge in his own Case, to determine for himself concerning his own Life and Usefulness in Opposition to the general Sense both of Nature and Scripture, and the constant Judgment of divine as well as human Laws.

Since therefore all the Injuries that I have mention'd against God and Man are committed by the *Murther of one's self* as well as *one's Neighbour*, it has pleas'd God severely to prohibit all Murther, and he has fixed the *sixth Commandment* in the Table of his Moral Law, where it stands like a Canon planted with open Mouth against the Man that dares such a publick and spreading Injury to God and Man. 'Tis a piece of divine Artillery charg'd with eternal Death. 1 *John* iii. 15. *No Murtherer hath eternal Life abiding in him, i. e.* has no Right to eternal Life, for he has not  
the

the Principles or Seeds of it in his Heart; and then surely eternal Death belongs to him, and must be his Portion.

*Another Prohibition of Murther is found among the first Laws that God gave to the new Race of Men after the Flood, Gen. ix. 6. Whosoever sheddeth Man's Blood, by Man shall his Blood be shed, for in the Image of God made he Man.* I confess, there is some Difficulty in determining precisely in what Sense we must take the *Image of God* in this Place: For the *Moral Image of God* which consisted in Righteousness and Holiness was lost by the Fall, whereas *that part of the Divine Image* which stands here as an Argument against the Destruction of Man is supposed to continue in his fallen Estate.

Shall we then suppose it has a Reference to *the erect Posture of his Body*, or *the Shape and Figure of Mankind*, in which God might appear to our first Parents? Then Murther is forbid upon this Account because it destroys



stroy the honourable Figure and Character of human Nature, whereby 'tis superior to all brutal Animals, and whereby it was dignified either by the Appearance of God the Father, or rather his Son *Jesus Christ* in it: Now this Reason stands firm against the *Destruction of our selves as well as of others.*

Or does it mean the *Dominion of Man over brute Creatures*, wherein he bears some *Image* or Resemblance of God's Dominion over this lower World? But that reaches not beyond this Life, and therefore there is an End put to this *Dominion*, to this part of the *Divine Image* by all Murther, *whether of others or of our selves.*

Or shall we say, that the *Immortality of the Soul of Man* is that *Image of God* which is here designed? Now though the Soul cannot be slain, yet by Murther an *immortal Creature* is sent into a certain and determined state of Happiness or Misery for a long Eternity, and the great God will not  
send

suffer any Man to take upon him to send an immortal Soul into so awful an Estate on a sudden, and by the meer Caprices of his own Will : And therefore he hath requir'd *Blood for Blood*; and since he hath appointed that Man should execute that Sentence on the *Murtherer of another Man* in this World; we have abundant Reason to believe that he will take Care to execute his own just Vengeance upon a *Self-Murtherer* in the invisible World, though he hath put himself out of the Reach of human Vengeance.

Or suppose after all I have not hit upon the exact Sense of the *Image of God* in this Place, yet this is very certain, that let the *Image of God* signify what it will, this *Image* is as much injur'd by the Murther of one's self, as by the Murther of one's Neighbour; and therefore the Prohibition stands in the same Force against both.

III. Consider that *our Saviour himself when he had a Body prepared for him by the Father, and was sent into the World, seems to acknowledge that*

*as he stood in the Rank of Men, he had not Power or Authority to lay down his own Life, but by the Commandment of God his Father.* He speaks of it as a special and peculiar Commission, that he had *Power to lay down his Life* as well as *Power to take it again*, neither of which other Mortals are invested with. *John x. 18. I lay down my Life of my self; I have Power to lay it down and I have Power to take it again: This Commandment have I received of my Father.* The original Word for Power is ἐξουσία, which signifies *Right* or *Authority*, which he derived from the Peculiarity of his Divine Commission. Otherwise he had been obliged to have us'd all his native Power and Skill to have sav'd himself from the Hands of his Enemies. Now if our Saviour himself considered meerly as Man, and abstracted from his Divine Nature, had not a Right to dispose of his own Life at Pleasure, without Divine Commission,

on, certainly no other Man may claim this Right.

IV. Consider that *had this Practice been lawful, all the pious Persons from Adam to this Day, who had been plung'd into extreme Distress and Anguish of Mind or Body in this World, might have relieved themselves by this Method*; all the Martyrs and Confessors of Scripture who were *ston'd*, who were *sawn asunder*, who were *put into Lions Dens*, who were *scourg'd* and *tortur'd*, seem to be guilty of great Folly, if they themselves might lawfully have put an end to their Miseries by this shorter Method: And the Honours that the Bible casts upon these Men are vain Honours, if they endured these terrible Trials, when they might have escaped them all without Guilt or Transgression.

Let it be noted also, that many good Men of old have earnestly wished to die, particularly *Elijah*, *Job*, *Jeremiah*, &c. but not one of them durst indulge a Thought of procuring Death  
to



to themselves, as being under the most certain Impressions of the horrible and crying Impiety of such a Practice: The utmost Efforts they made towards it was to pray God to release them, but they never dar'd to attempt their own Release.

V. Consider *what sort of Men they have been who are recorded in Scripture as Self-Murthberers.* *Achitophel* a false Traytor, who counselled *Absalom* to rebel against his Father *David*. *Saul* a bloody Man, who forsook God and was forsaken of God. *Zimri* a most wicked King of *Israel*, and *Judas* who betray'd our blessed Saviour, &c. Good Men may be tempted sorely in this matter, but we do not find that they have been given up to comply with the Temptation.

You will readily reply, "*But what was Samson?* Is he not number'd among the ancient and sacred Heroes who liv'd and dy'd in Faith, *Heb. xi. 32?* and did he not destroy himself together with the *Philistines*."

“ *tines* when he pull’d down the  
 “ House upon their Heads? And was  
 “ not this done also with Design and  
 “ Resolution, when he said, *Let me*  
 “ *die with the Philistines* ?

*Ans.* 1. It is evident that the Apostle in that Chapter is reckoning up all the glorious Effects of *Faith*, whether it be *Faith of Miracles* which may be found with Sinners, or *Faith which accompanies Salvation* and belongs only to the Saints. Now there is very little of the Character of a Saint that belongs to *Samson* either in his Life or in his Death. *The Spirit of the Lord came upon him* indeed as a Spirit of Miracles, for the Deliverance of *Israel* from Oppression, but his Life seems to be stain’d with many Crimes; and in the Moment of his Death he desired *to be avenged of the Philistines for his two Eyes*: So that we find little or nothing of the *Fruits of the Spirit* in him which the Apostle describes, *Gal. v. 22. Gentleness,*

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*tleness, Goodness, Meekness, Temperance, &c.*

*Ans.* 2. If it should be granted that *Samson* had Religion and Virtue enough in him to be called a *good Man*, yet as the other Exercises of his miraculous Strength were perform'd under the Influence of the Spirit or by Inspiration, so we may suppose that at his Death he had a *Divine Call* or *Inspiration* (as he had certainly *miraculous Aid*) to destroy the *Philistines*, though he himself fell with them; and though it must be confess'd there was a Mixture of his own sinful Revenge in his Heart, yet the Spirit of God might dictate that Action in general, though not as mingled with his own Revenge. Now since this was done by a special Divine Commission, it cannot be drawn by us into an Example for our Imitation.

Well, if *Suicide* cannot be justified by the Examples of Scripture, you will try what the *Roman* and *Greek* Histories can do towards it. Perhaps you will  
say,

say, “ Surely had it been so criminal  
 “ an Action, the great and wise Men  
 “ of Antiquity would not have in-  
 “ dulg’d the Practice of it, nor would  
 “ their Names have been inrolled a-  
 “ mong the Sons of Honour. But we  
 “ find Curtius and Cato, Brutus and  
 “ Otho, and others who destroy’d  
 “ themselves, celebrated as Men of  
 “ Virtue, as noble Patriots and great  
 “ Heroes, even on the Account of  
 “ their Death as well as their Life.

*Answer.* Alas, to what Purpose  
 should a *Christian* cite the *Heathens*  
 to justify that which the Scripture for-  
 bids? They had very little Knowledge  
 of the true God, very dark and doubt-  
 ful Notices of their Duty to their Crea-  
 tor, to themselves, and to their Fel-  
 low Creatures: And though the Light  
 of Nature would have taught them bet-  
 ter had they duly and carefully con-  
 sulted it, yet it is evident that they ac-  
 tually mistook their Duty in many In-  
 stances that were obvious enough to  
 common Reason. They imagined  
 that



that the Destruction of a Tyrant, the Preservation of their Country, or the meer Honour of their own Nation, or the Guard of their real or fancy'd Virtues, was sufficient to license and sanctify almost any Practices whatsoever.

They had many false and foolish Notions of *Courage, Greatness* and *Honour*, which betray'd them into real Iniquities. They sent forth their Armies to rob and plunder Nations to satisfy their own Ambition and Thirst of Honour; they could murder Thousands of Mankind in order to enlarge their Bounds of Empire, and for the Glory of their King or of their native City: 'Twas no wonder that Men of such Principles should *imbrue their Hands in their own Blood* under the Influence of such sort of Motives and Pretences. Besides this, they were animated with the Expectation of Fame after Death: Immortal Memory

ry and Renown were the Rewards of what they called *Heroic Actions*. And thus the *Heathens* might glory in their own Shame, but they are not set up for our Guides or Patterns. A *Christian* must regulate his whole Conduct by the Law of his God, by the Rules of the Gospel, by the Views and Hopes and Fears of eternal Rewards or Punishments, which are reveal'd to him in a diviner Light.

Let it be consider'd yet further, that the Motives by which some of these *Heathen Heroes* were drawn to *Self-Destruction* are such as scarce ever come into the Question now a-days, and do by no means respect Men in the ordinary Situation of human Life. Which of us has any View or Hope or Pretence to benefit Thousands by our Death? to save a Nation from Civil War? to deliver our Country from the Anger of God and a Pestilence by offering our selves as a Sacrifice? to sink in one Ruin with the Liberties of a State,

a State, which we our selves have long supported ? These are the Excuses that are made for those ancient *Heathens*, and cover'd their Names from Infamy in such a bloody Action. The History of these Men and the Honour done them by *Pagan* Writers can give no manner of Sanction to those mean and ridiculous Motives which are the Occasions of *Self-Murther* in our Weekly News Papers in the present Age. The *Romans* themselves would have made a Jest of those who pretended to imitate these their *Heroes*, without being placed in the same Circumstances, or having equal Motives ; and (as a Modern Writer well expresses it) “ Should any Man now  
“ have it in his Power to acquaint  
“ the Ghost of *Cato* or *Brutus* that  
“ there was a Country in which Men  
“ often deliberately and coolly dispatch themselves, and voluntarily  
“ flee out of Life ; *One* because his  
“ Mistress is not propitious to his Pas-  
C sion ;

“ sion; *another*, because his fordid  
 “ love of Money has been disap-  
 “ pointed; *another*, because he has  
 “ dissipated his whole Fortune in  
 “ the most dissolute and abandon’d  
 “ Luxury and Debauchery; *another*,  
 “ because his Scheme for Advance-  
 “ ment to Honour has been dashed  
 “ to Pieces; *another*, because in the  
 “ midst of hoards of Money, he is  
 “ terrified with the Dread of fu-  
 “ ture Want; and *others*, perhaps,  
 “ because the Weather lies heavy  
 “ upon them, and the Wind blows  
 “ from an unfavourable Corner: And  
 “ should they be acquainted, that in  
 “ all these Cases, their Names and  
 “ their Examples are appeal’d to;  
 “ what would they say? They would  
 “ declare it a Country of Mad-men  
 “ and Fools; and lament their own  
 “ Fate, to be cited for the Justifica-  
 “ tion, or Excuse of odious, base  
 “ and unseemly Actions, which have  
 “ no Pretence worthy of a Man, to  
 “ cover them.

Not



“ Not that I am at all (says this  
“ Writer) designing to justify those  
“ great Men themselves. On the  
“ contrary many things might be  
“ urged against those Ancients, e-  
“ ven upon their own Scheme, and  
“ the Principles of Reason. If I  
“ should say that the Death of Ca-  
“ to was a *Mixture of Impatience*  
“ *and Pride*; that he ought in love  
“ to his Country to have reserved  
“ himself for a better Opportunity  
“ of serving it; that it is probable,  
“ from the Events which followed,  
“ that he might afterwards have been  
“ an Instrument of good to it; that  
“ he rashly, and in a Passion, judg’d  
“ of what he could not well judge  
“ of, that it was a sullen Pride of  
“ Heart not to deign to live, be-  
“ cause in one Trial, his Cause  
“ had not been successful; and that  
“ a true Greatness of Soul had been  
“ more seen, even in accepting his  
“ Life (if that had been necessary)  
“ at the Hands of the Man, in whose

“ Power omnipotent *Providence* or  
 “ *Fate* (which he believed irresistible)  
 “ had put it: All this would be  
 “ hard to refute upon the Principles  
 “ of any Philosophy.

I might add yet further, that tho’ some of the Philosophers among the *Heathens* did allow, yet the best of them did utterly condemn this Practice, as a rash forsaking the Station in which the Providence of their Gods had placed Men. Tho’ I have argued particularly on this head already, yet in this Place I cannot forbid my self the Pleasure of citing the strong Expressions of some of these *Heathens* against *Self-Murther*, as they are agreeably represented by Dr. *S. Clark* in his Discourse of *Natural and reveal’d Religion*. Prop. I.

“ He that sent us into the World,  
 “ and alone knows for how long time  
 “ he appointed us our Station here,  
 “ and when we have finished all the  
 “ Business he intended we should do,  
 “ can alone judge when it is fit for

“ us

“ us to be taken hence, and has  
 “ alone Authority to dismiss and  
 “ discharge us. This Reasoning has  
 “ been admirably applied by *Plato*,  
 “ *Cicero*, and others of the best Phi-  
 “ losophers; so that tho’ the *Stoicks*  
 “ of old, and the *Deists* of late, have  
 “ in their ranting Discourses (and  
 “ some few of them in their rash  
 “ Practice) contradicted it; yet they  
 “ have never been able, with any  
 “ Colour of Reason, to answer or  
 “ evade their force of the Argument:  
 “ Which indeed to speak the Truth  
 “ has been urged by the foremen-  
 “ tioned Philosophers, with such  
 “ singular Beauty, as well as invin-  
 “ cible Strength, that it seems not  
 “ capable of having any thing added  
 “ to it. Wherefore I shall give it  
 “ you only in some of their own  
 “ Words. *We Men* (says *Plato* in  
 the Person of *Socrates*) *are all by*  
*the Appointment of God in a*  
*certain Prison or Custody, which*  
*we ought not to break out of, and*

run away. We are as Servants, or as Cattle in the Hand of God: And would not any of us, saith he, if one of our Servants should, contrary to our Direction, and to escape out of our Service, kill himself, think we had just reason to be very angry, and, if it was in our Power, punish him for it? So likewise Cicero: God, says he, the Supreme Governour of all things, forbids us to depart hence without his Order: And tho' when the divine Providence does it self offer us a just Occasion of leaving this World, (as when a Man chooses to suffer Death rather than commit Wickedness) a wise Man will then indeed depart joyfully, as out of a Place of Sorrow and Darknes into Light; yet he will not be in such hast as to break his Prison contrary to Law; but will go when God calls him, as a Prisoner when dismissed by the Magistrate or lawful Power. Tusc. Quest. lib.



lib. 1. Again ; *That short remainder of Life*, saith he, *which Old Men have a Prospect of*, they ought neither too eagerly to desire, nor yet on the contrary unreasonably and discontentedly deprive themselves of it ; for as Pythagoras teaches, it is as unlawful for a Man without the Command of God, to remove himself out of the World ; as for a Soldier to leave his Post without his General's Order, De Seneſt. And in another Place : Unless that God, saith he, whose Temple and Palace this whole World is, discharges you himself out of the Prison of the Body, you can never be received to his Favour. Wherefore you, and all pious Men, ought to have patience to continue in the Body, as long as God shall please, who sent us hither ; and not force your selves out of the World before he calls for you ; lest you be deserters of the Station appointed you by God. Somn. Scip. And, to mention no more ; that excellent Author, Arrian, Book I. Wait, saith he, th

good Pleasure of God: When he signifies it to be his Will, that you should be discharged from this Service, then depart willingly; but in the mean time have Patience, and tarry in the Place where he has appointed you: Wait, and do not hurry your selves away wilfully and unreasonably. “The Objections, which  
“ the Author of the *Defence of Self-*  
“ *Murther*, prefixed to the *Oracles*  
“ *of Reason*, has attempted to advance against this Argument, are  
“ so weak and childish, that it is evident he could not, at the Time  
“ he wrote them, believe in earnest  
“ that there was any Force in them:  
“ As when he says, that *the Reason*  
“ *why 'tis not lawful for a Centi-*  
“ *nel to leave his Station without*  
“ *his Commander's Order, is because*  
“ *he entered into the Service by his*  
“ *own Consent*; as if God had not  
“ a just Power to lay any Commands  
“ upon his Creatures, without their  
“ own Consent: Or when he says,  
“ that

“ that *there are many lawful ways*  
 “ *to seek Death in*; as if, because  
 “ a Man may lawfully venture his  
 “ Life in many publick Services,  
 “ therefore it was lawful for him  
 “ directly to throw it away upon  
 “ any foolish Discontent. Thus far  
 Dr. Clark.

This *Objection* drawn from the  
 Practice of the *Heathens* has diverted  
 me from my Train of Arguments:  
 But I proceed.

VI. Reflect upon the *Nature of the*  
*Fact*: Perhaps 'tis the *most unnatural*  
*Practice that can come within the*  
*Reach of Man*. Self-Preservation is  
 such a Law of Nature, that it is writ.  
 ten as it were in the Animal as well  
 as in the Mind, 'tis mingled with our  
 Flesh and Blood and our very Constitu-  
 tion; we must sin therefore against our  
 Bodies and our Souls together when  
 we perpetrate this Wickedness. 'Tis  
 well exprest by a late Writer that “ our  
 “ Creator would not have arm'd Life  
 “ with such a dread of Death, which

“ is rarely overcome, nor involved  
 “ the Contemplation of Death in so  
 “ many appalling Doubts and Appre-  
 “ hensions, if the quitting of Life of  
 “ our own Accord had been agreea-  
 “ ble to his Schemes of Providence.  
 “ It is evident God hath Way-laid  
 “ the Roads to Death with Ambus-  
 “ cades of Terror, on purpose to  
 “ prevent our voluntary Approaches  
 “ to it. Nature it self is passionate-  
 “ ly abhorrent from it; it throws  
 “ our whole Frame into a Tumult,  
 “ and the Man who hath resolved it  
 “ finds a Drawback within himself  
 “ that silently withholds him.

Upon these Accounts it is hardly  
 supposed to be done without some  
*strong Temptations of the Devil*, that  
 evil and cruel Spirit, who is a *Mur-  
 therer* from the Beginning: And 'tis  
 he only who finds his Account in it,  
 and regales his hellish Passions of Ma-  
 lice and Envy against God and Man.  
 This vile Spirit is eminently gratified  
 when we give ear to such a Tempta-  
 tion :



tion : He had the Impudence to tempt our blessed Lord in this manner, *Cast thy self down from the Pinnacle of the Temple* ; but our Lord repelled him with Indignation, and left us an Example : *The Hour* in which his Father had appointed him to yield up his Life *was not yet come.*

VII. Consider that if *it be lawful for you to put an End to your own Life because you are weary of it, perhaps it would also be lawful for any other Man to do the same for you with your Leave and at your Request.* But 'tis not lawful for another Man to do it, therefore, not for your self. I borrow my Argument from this Consideration, that since it is lawful for me to *cut off a gangreen'd or a broken Limb* in order to save Life, 'tis lawful to *give my Arm to the Surgeon and to desire him to cut it off* ; and the Surgeon does it without Blame in the Sight of God or Man. This he could not do without my Leave. But my own Right to do it being convey'd

to him does in this Case authorize him to do it. So if I had Right to destroy my self, my own Right would authorize another to destroy me.

I grant there are some Cases wherein a Man may possess an inalienable Right which he cannot convey to another, such are Rights of Honour, as *Nobility, Magistracy*, Rights of Natural Relation, as *Paternity, Filiation*, &c. because these relate to other Persons. But so far as any Man has a Right to injure, or maim, or destroy his own Body, I see no Reason why it may not be convey'd to another by his Authority: And if a Man might lawfully stab himself, I think the same Right might be convey'd to another Man to stab him.

Now ask your self, If a Person were weary of his Life and begg'd that you would knock him on the Head, would you not think it unlawful, and consequently be afraid to destroy him, though at his own Request? Do you not think this in the common Nature of  
of

Sect. I.      *of Self-Murther.*      37

of Things would be a great Injury to his Relations, to his Friends, to his Country and to human Society, though the Person himself desir'd it? Do you not imagine this would be *true Murther* both in the Sight of God and Man, and justly expose you to Punishment? But it seems to me that he might as well give you Power to murder him, as assume the Power himself. If the taking away the Life of such a Person would be *Murther*, then the taking away your own Life is *Murther* too, and therefore by no means is it an Act allowable or lawful in the Sight of God.

VIII. Consider *how many Practices there are which God has forbidden in his Word as being injurious to our own Bodies, yet each of them seem to be far less pernicious in their Nature, and in their Consequences than Self-Murther is*; and thence we may draw a strong Argument to prove that *Self-Murther is not only sinful but a very heinous Sin.* All manner of *Intemperance*

*perance* is forbidden by the Word of God; *Gluttony* and *Drunkenness* have a Tendency to ruin our Health and destroy our Natures, and these are prohibited in the old Testament and in the new. *Whoredom* or *Fornication* is a Sin *against the Body*, and as such it is exposed in Scripture as an aggravated Iniquity that a *Man should sin against his own Body*, 1 Cor. vi. 18. The Body of a Christian is said to be the *Temple of the Holy Spirit*, and *him that defiles this Temple God will destroy*, 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. Now are there such Denunciations against those Iniquities that *injure or defile the human Body*, and must we not suppose the Guilt of the Person is more aggravated, and that his Punishment shall be more severe who *wilfully destroys the Body* which God has given him?

God has been pleas'd to set a Guard upon human Life by forbidding all those *Excesses and Irregularities of Appetite and Passion* which injure Health, and tend to the Ruin of our

2

Natures;



Natures ; and doubtless the *actual Destruction* of our Natures is a more heinous Crime in his Sight.

IX. Consider further, how *inconsistent is this Practice with that Dependance on the Providence of the Almighty, that humble waiting for God, that Trust and Hope in Divine Mercy, and that Patience, Resignation and quiet Submission which are due to God our supreme Governor.* Suppose he is pleas'd to try us with a Delay of Answer to our Prayers, with Poverty, Disappointment, Sicknes, Pain or Trouble in the Flesh, must we resolve to die presently? This is breaking away from God's Hand in an unwarrantable manner: 'Tis a renouncing of that Self-Dedication and Surrender which we have made of our selves to God: 'Tis utterly contrary to that humble Devotedness to the Will of God which *Christianity* requires of all its Professors. How can I say *I am the Lord's*, or *thy Will be done*, when I will not so much as let him

him

him determine in which World I shall serve him, the visible or the invisible?

Perhaps it is the present Purpose of God to put you under this *Instance of Probation*, as part of the Trial of your Obedience in order to a future Reward: 'Tis the Language of Divine Providence when we are exercis'd with any pressing Affliction, " Let

" me see how you will bear this  
" Trial; how you will honour my  
" Sovereignty with Holy Submission,  
" with Constancy and Patience; Let  
" me see whether you will glorify  
" your Creator, your Governor, and  
" your Lord, in the *passive* as well  
" as in the *active* Parts of Life.

" No, (says the Self-Murderer) I  
" will not endure this Trial; I'll rid  
" my self of this Hardship; I'll bear  
" it no longer; I have no Patience,  
" nor will I submit to this Method of  
" Divine Probation; I'll hasten my  
" Appearance before the Judgment-  
" Seat; there let my Judge determine  
" my final Estate according to the

" Days

“ Days of my past Life and past Trials, for I will not suffer my State of Probation to be prolonged any farther.” How is it possible now that such a rebellious Creature can ever expect Favour or Absolution at the Hands of God his Judge?

Thus I have finished the *Considerations* which in my Opinion give abundant Proof of the *Unlawfulness of such a Practice*, and I would conclude them with this solemn Sentence, The Man who can take all these Arguments into his View, and in the full Exercise of his Reason will after all venture upon so unnatural and aggravated a Crime, and will plunge himself into Eternity on such groundless Presumptions of Divine Pardon, must in the common Sense of Mankind *here* and in his own awakened Conscience *hereafter* be deemed a just Sacrifice of Divine Wrath, and for ever unworthy of pardoning Grace.

## S E C T. II.

*Some general Dissuasions from  
Self-Murder, by shewing the  
Folly and Danger of it.*

**W**HEN this bloody Practice has been proved to be *highly criminal* in the Sight of God, we can hardly suppose that any other Considerations should be more effectual to deter a Man who professes Christianity from the Guilt of so aggravated a Sin: Yet it may be possible to set the dangerous and dreadful Consequences of this Practice in a fuller View, a more diffusive and affecting Light: For if you turn it on all Sides it has still some new Appearances of Terror, and furnishes out new *Dissuasives* from the Execution of it.

I. Consider that *'tis too dangerous an Attempt to venture upon it unless you had a full Assurance of its Lawfulness.*



*fulness.* Now suppose the Power of your own Iniquities, the Artifices of the Tempter, and the prevailing ill Humours of Animal Nature should join together so fatally as to blind your Eyes against the full Conviction of its Sinfulness, yet you can never prove that *Self-Murder is certainly a lawful thing.* The furthest you can go is to suppose that possibly it may be lawful ; but on the other hand, if you should be under a Mistake, 'tis a dreadful, 'tis a fatal, 'tis an eternal One. You put your self beyond all possibility of rectifying this Error through all the long Ages of Futurity.

Whatsoever vain Fancies some of the *Heathens* have indulg'd who knew not God, and had very little and dark Apprehensions of a future State, yet in the *Christian* World the utmost that the most sanguine or most melancholy among this Tribe can well pretend is, that *perhaps it may be Lawful, or at least that it is a little and a very pardonable*

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*donable Crime*, (and they have been forced to wink their Eyes against the Light to arrive at this *perhaps*). But if it be not pardonable, then nothing remains for the Criminal but everlasting Punishment. That terrible word *Eternal, Eternal, Eternal Misery*, carries such a long doleful Accent with it, and includes such an immense Train of Agonies without Hope, that it is infinitely better to bear the Sorrows, the Trials and Uneasinesses of this Life for a few short and uncertain Years, than rashly to venture upon such a Practice, whose pretended and doubtful Advantages bear no Proportion at all to the infinite and extreme Hazard of an endless State of Torment.

II. Suppose you could by any false Reasonings persuade your Consciences that the Act of Self-Destruction was no Sin, yet *are you so sure of the present Goodness of your State towards God, and that all your other Sins are pardoned, that you could plunge your*  
*self*

*self this Moment into Eternity?* 'Tis generally under a Fit of Impatience that Persons are tempted to destroy themselves; now is the present Frame and Temper of your Soul such as is fit to appear in before the great Tribunal of Heaven? You well know that *as the Tree falls so it must lye, to the North or to the South*, Eccl. xi. 3. *After Death Judgment* immediately succeeds, Heb. ix. 27. There is no Faith and Repentance in the Grave, nor pardoning Grace to be implored when the State of Trial is past, Eccl. ix. 10. Isa. xxxviii. 18. *They that go down to the Pit cannot hope for thy Truth.* Are you now so sure of your Creator's Love, and of your perfect Conformity to his Laws of Judgment? Are you so Holy, so Innocent, so Righteous in your self, or so certain of your Interest in the Merits of a Mediator, that you dare rush this Moment before the Bar of a great and terrible God, and tell him that you are come to have your State determined for all Everlasting?

lasting? If not, be wise and bethink your self a little : Use and improve the Delay and Opportunity which his Grace and Providence offer you in this Life, for a more effectual securing a better Life hereafter.

But if we go a little farther and suppose the *Action in it self to be criminal*, then remember that you send your self out of this World with the Guilt of a wilful Criminal Action on your Conscience ; you preclude your own Repentance of this Sin in this World, and the other World knows no Repentance that is available to any good Purpose. You shoot your self headlong into an Eternal State ; and are you sure that you shall never repent of it in the long future Ages of your Existence? But, alas! all that Repentance comes too late to relieve you from the dismal Effects of your Rashness. All the Repentance of that invisible World is but the Sting of Conscience which will add exquisite Pain to your appointed Punishment. Surely



ly you should have the most evident and undeniable Proofs of the Goodness of that Action which can never be revers'd, and which puts you for ever beyond all Possibility of useful Repentance.

Give me Leave to add in this Place what is the constant Doctrine of the Bible and the Sense of Christians, (*viz.*) that a *Wilful Sinner dying impenitent cannot be sav'd*. Now if there be no Space given for serious Reflection and Penitence in the Case of a *Self-Murtherer*, what Room is there for Hope hereafter? except only where the Persons really distracted, and the Great God our Judge knows how to distinguish exactly how far every Action is influenced by bodily Distempers. This is the only hope of surviving Friends.

III. Think yet again, *what an Odium, what Scandal and everlasting Shame you bring upon your Name and Character by such a Fact*. 'Tis a Reproach that spreads wide among the Kindred of the Self-Murtherer; It descends

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descends to his Posterity and follows him thro' many Generations.

It may be observed also that in the *Rubrick of the Church of England* before the Burial Service, *Self-Murthers* are ranked with *Excommunicated Persons*: The Church has no Hope of them as true Christians: And as the Church denies them *Christian Burial*, so the *Civil Government* did heretofore appoint that they should be put into the Earth with utmost Contempt; and this was generally done in some publick *Cross-Way*, that the Shame and Infamy might be made known to every Passenger; and that this Infamy might be lasting, they were ordained to have a Stake driven through their dead Bodies which was not to be removed. 'Tis Pity this Practice has been omitted of late Years by the too favourable Sentence of their Neighbours on the Jury, who generally pronounce them *Distracted*: And thus they are excused from this publick Mark of Abhorrence. Perhaps

haps 'twere much better if this Practice were revived again; for since the Laws of Men cannot punish their Persons, therefore their dead Bodies should be expos'd to just and deserved Shame, that so this Iniquity might be laid under all the *Odium* that human Power and Law can cast upon it, to testify a just Abhorrence of the Fact, and to deter Survivers from the like Practice.

IV. Can *any Man of a generous or kind Disposition think of all the Mischief done to his Friends and Kindred by the Destruction of himself*, and yet practise it? Think of the publick Scandal and Disgrace that it spreads over the whole Family; think of the Shame and inward Anguish of Spirit that it necessarily gives to surviving Friends and Relatives; What Sorrow of Heart for the Loss of a Father, or Mother or Brother, a Sister, a Daughter, or a Son in such a sudden, such a dreadful, and such a shameful man-

ner of Death? What terrible Perplexity of Spirit what inconsolable Vexation of Mind, what Fears of eternal Misery for the Soul of the deceas'd? This gives them a Wound beyond what they are able to bear, and sometimes wears out their Life in Sorrow, and brings them down to the Grave. One would think that the Injury done to Friends and dear Relations would be a sufficient Bar against it, to Souls who have any sense of Justice, or any pretence to Goodness and Love. If it be so hard for you to bear a little *Poverty, Shame, Sorrow, Reproach, &c.* that you will dye rather than bear it, why will you entail these on your Kindred and on those who love you best?

In order to work upon Persons that have any Compassion for their surviving Kindred, 'tis fit they should know also that the *English Law* calls a *Self-Murtherer, Felo de se*, or a *Felon to himself*, and upon this account the Estate and Effects of  
the



Sect. II.      of *Self-Murther*.      51

the deceased are forfeited by Law and cannot descend to the Relatives, unless it appear that the Person who laid violent Hands upon himself was distracted. Now in this Case Bishop *Fleetwood* finds Fault severely with *Juries* who now a-days bring in almost all *Self-Murtherers* distracted, and he desires them to consider, “ Whether the constant Mitigation  
“ of the Rigours of the Law against  
“ *Self-Murtherers* mayn’t give some  
“ Encouragement to that Practice;  
“ and whether the favourable Verdict they bring in, be always so  
“ righteous and so seasonable as they  
“ imagine? And since the Wisdom  
“ of the Law intends that the *Confiscation of Estates*, the *undoing a*  
“ *Family*, and the *shameful Burial*  
“ shall deter them from these horrible Attempts, whether the Mercy that defeats all these Intentions  
“ be not more likely to continue  
“ than to repress these cruel Violences? Were a Person sure that

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“ his Estate would be forfeited, and  
“ his Effects carried away from his  
“ Wife, Children and Family, were  
“ he sure that his dead Body should  
“ be publicly expos’d, bury’d in the  
“ High-way, and with a Stake driven  
“ through it as a Mark of huge In-  
“ famy, perhaps he would give way  
“ to calmer Counsels, and be con-  
“ tent to bear a little Shame, or Pain,  
“ or Loss, till God saw fit to put  
“ an End to all his Sufferings by  
“ natural Means : And therefore an  
“ Instance or two of such Severity  
“ as is legal, well and wisely cho-  
“ sen, might prove a greater Pre-  
“ servative against these Violences,  
“ than such a constant and expected  
“ Mercy, as we always find on these  
“ Occasions : For Men have now no  
“ fear of Laws ; and when they have  
“ laid aside the Fear of God, they  
“ go about this Business with great  
“ Readiness, they are sure of Fa-  
“ vour in this World, and they  
“ will venture the other.

V. Think

V. Think in the last Place *how fatal an Influence your Example may have to bring Death and Ruin on others, and that on their immortal Souls as well as their mortal Life.* Remember what an effect the *Self-Murther* of *Saul* had, when his *Armour Bearer* followed him, and dy'd also by his own Sword. And oftentimes where *Self-Murther* is practised, it fills the Heads of other melancholy and uneasy Persons with the same bloody Thoughts, and teaches them to enter into the same Temptation.

Think then with your self, "What  
 " if I should not only destroy my own  
 " Soul for ever, but become the  
 " dreadful occasion of others destroy-  
 " ing their Souls, and flinging them-  
 " selves into the same Place of Tor-  
 " ture? What sharp Accents will this  
 " add to my anguish of Conscience,  
 " in Hell, that I have led others in-  
 " to the same Wretchedness without  
 " Remedy, without Hope, and with-  
 " out End? Think and enquire whe-  
 D 3 ther

54 *The Folly and Danger, &c. Sect. II.*

ther every *Self-Murthrer* who may be influenced hereafter by your Example to this impious Fact, may not be sent particularly to visit your Ghost in those invisible Regions, and become a new Tormentor. Whether all such future Events may not be turn'd by the just Judgment of God to encrease your Agonies and Horrors of Soul in that World of Despair and Misery.



SECT. III.



## S E C T. III.

*The Pretences for Self-Murther,  
and the Motives to it Examin'd  
and Answer'd.*

SOME of the *Pretences* for this Criminal Practice have been obviated already, while we were displaying the *Guilt*, the *Folly* and the *Danger* of it: Let us now come to consider the rest of the chief *Motives wherewith this Temptation is enforced*: And here we shall see what meer Shadows, most of them are, what poor thin Colours of Argument, such as one would think should never pass upon a Creature who retains the Exercise of his Reason, and pretends to any share of Understanding or Fore-

D 4                      thought

thought, since the infinite Concerns of an eternal Futurity so vastly overbalance all present Appearances.

I. *Pretence.* One Person finds his Circumstances sinking in the World, or it may be, he is overwhelm'd at once with the Loss of his Estate; *I cannot bear, saith he, the Thoughts of Poverty. What! to be brought to a Morsel of Bread, and live like a Beggar! I had rather die than be beholden to Charity to keep me alive.*

*Ans.* This is the Pride of thy Spirit, O Man; But is it not incomparably better to mortify this Pride, and submit to the Will and Providence of thy Creator for a few Days here on Earth in a state of Trial, than to plunge thy self into a State of certain and everlasting Wretchedness?

Perhaps it will be reply'd, *But I am in starving Circumstances, I am afraid I shall perish with Want, why may I not then hasten my Dismission*

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*sion from this World and prevent my Fears?*

I *Answer*, Whatever Fears are prevented by this rash and bloody Experiment, your real and more dreadful Sorrows will be hastened. You want the Supports of Life here, but will you therefore send your self into a World of universal Want and Sorrow, where you shall have no Supply, where your Necessities of various and unknown kinds shall be ever raging and violent, and where you shall obtain no manner of Relief, no, not a drop of Water to cool your Tongue in the midst of Torments?

Besides, I think there are no Persons in such a Condition in our Nation, but that either by the Laws of the Land, or by a proper Application to Persons of Beneficence, they may find Relief from starving, if they are but sincerely willing to labour as far as their Capacity admits, and then apply themselves to pro-

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per

per Methods and to proper Persons, in order to obtain this Relief. The Providence of God corresponds with his Promises: *Tho' the Lyons roar and suffer hunger, yet they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing that is necessary for them, Psal. xxxiv.*

*10. The Eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his Mercy, to deliver their Soul from Death, and to keep them alive in Famine, Psal. xxxiii. 18, 19. Trust in the Lord, and do good, so shalt thou dwell in the Land, and verily thou shalt be fed, Psal. xxxvii. 3.*

II. *Pretence.* Another will say, *I have liv'd in some Credit and Reputation in the World, and I am now falling into universal Disgrace and Infamy, and in my Opinion Shame is worse than Death.*

*Ans.* But is *Shame* worse than *Hell* too? That's a proud Spirit indeed that had rather commit the greatest Sin against God, than undergo



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dergo Disgrace from Men: That had rather venture the weight of the Arm of God, in a way of Vengeance, than a little noisy and scornful Breath of poor perishing Mortals. Mortify thy Pride, O Sinner, and the Temptation is at an End; or dispise the Shame, if it be undeserved.

But perhaps thou hast *committed some foul and shameful Sin*, and thou art afraid of *Punishment and Disgrace* together, and therefore thou fliest to the Sword or the Halter, to a Pond of Water, or to Poison, to secure thy self from that Disgrace.

Wretched Reasoning this, and foolish Hope! What is there casts a greater Blot upon the Name of any Man, so long as his Memory lives in the World, than to say, *he hang'd or drown'd, he poison'd or stabbed himself?* This is a Stain shall never be wiped away: And when thou risest out of thy Grave at the last Day, thou shalt *arise to everlasting Shame*

*and Contempt.* Besides all thy other Sins, this shall be published before Angels and Men, that thou wert guilty of the most unnatural Wickedness in the World. What a senseless Practice is it for Men to bring upon themselves eternal Shame and Confusion only for this End, that they may escape what is Temporal?

III. The third Pretence is this. *I have been disappointed in the greatest and most important Affairs of Life. When my hopes rose highest they were blasted on a sudden and quite destroyed. My Heart was entirely set upon this Blessing, my Expectations are dashed, and my Heart is broke. All the World besides is insignificant Emptiness or a painful Vexation to me, and what should I do any longer in such a World where I meet with nothing but Vexation and Emptiness?*

*Ans.* And do you not know that Vanity and Vexation has been written upon all this World, by the wisest

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wisest of Men long before you were born? Has not this Lesson been taught most Men by sad Experience in every Age? And must you resolve to die because you have learnt it? Have not the most flourishing hopes of a thousand other Persons been blasted as well as yours, and the fairest Blessings of Life wither'd in their Hands? And yet the Wise and the Foolish have survived this Loss; what a poor Reason is this for you to doom your self to death, and to make your self your own Executioner? Are there no Comforts, no Friends, no Hopes left in this World to support you under the present Disquietude and pain of Mind? Will not *Time* and *Patience* make that Burden easy which now seems unsupportable? *Patience* and *Time* with their soft and gentle Hand have apply'd Medicines to a thousand broken Hearts and healed them. Is your Wound incurable? Is there no Balm on Earth, and no Physician in Heaven?

Suppose

Suppose there is a huge Vacancy made in your Soul by some great and surprising Loss, turn your Thoughts to that great and Almighty God, in whose Hands are all the Springs of Life, and all the Blessings of Time and Eternity: He can fill up that huge Vacancy with better Blessings and with his own Presence. This shall make your Loss grow lighter, and set your Soul at ease. He can wean your Heart from every Creature by uniting it more nearly to himself. And since you have acted foolishly in setting up a Creature in the room of God, he can set up himself as chief in your Heart in the room of that Idol Creature: And you shall be able to say, *God is my all, What have I to do any more with Idols?* By the wondrous Methods of his Wisdom and Providence he can make your Losses turn to your Advantage; and instead of *Hopes* or *Enjoyments* that have forsaken and disappointed you,



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he can give you an Interest in his Promises, his holy Covenant, in the Riches of his Grace, and the Inheritance of his Glory. These are *Hopes* which will never fail ; these are *Enjoyments* which will never vanish or leave you empty and disappointed. And besides all this, he has all the Stores of Nature in his Hand, and all the Comforts of Life : He can furnish you with Blessings in this World, that may in some measure answer the Losses which you mourn, or turn the Stream of your Thoughts into such a peaceful Channel as shall make you forget your Sorrows.

Thus much to relieve and support the Mourner. But give me leave to reason with you in a more awful manner against the Temptation which at present you seem to indulge.

What if you have lost every thing that is desirable on Earth, and that without hope of Reparation, will you resolve therefore to lose Hea-

Ven

ven too? Is this World become painful to you, and can you find at present no Comforts to be enjoy'd in it, and will you therefore throw your self headlong into a World of eternal Pain, where Comfort can never come, nor any Shadow of Pleasure, where there is no Rest, no Peace, no Hope, through all the Ages of Immortality? Are you disappointed in your Dreams of Happiness in a Creature, and will you therefore abandon your Hope in God? Will you profanely say, *he shall not be my Happiness*? Will the everlasting Wrath of God, the Anguish of Conscience, and the Rage of Devils in another World, heal that Heart which was broken in this? What monstrous Folly and Absurdity appears in such Pretences! A strange way of relieving our selves under the Loss of a *temporal Blessing*, to plunge into the Ocean of *eternal* Misery, and fly into that World  
which

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which is under the unchangeable *Curse* of God!

IV. *Pretence.* But my Temptation is yet greater still, says another Person, who is contriving to destroy himself; my Circumstances are such that *I shall only prolong a Life of Misery, and pass thro' a lingering Death of greater Pain and Torment unless I anticipate the Hour, and put an End to my Life at once, in an easier and shorter Way: I am in Captivity or in Prison, and sentenc'd to a dreadful Execution; or I am languishing out my Life in extreme Torments of Body, the Gout or the Stone; or my Limbs are broken, and I have no hope of ease or healing, why should I not then cut short my Life and my Anguish together?*

*Answ.* Think what Instances of the same kind may be found in Scripture, what their various Characters were, and what their Practice. Bloody *Saul* will dye by his own Hands rather than that the *Philistines* should slay

66. *The Pretences for* Sect. III.

slay him. *Achitophel* was afraid of being taken and executed for his Treason, and therefore he hang'd himself. When *Zimri* a wicked King saw that the City was taken, and that he must fall into the Hands of his Enemies, he burnt the King's House over him and dy'd. 1 *King* xvi. 18. The *Heathen Jaylor* fearing his Prisoners had escaped, *Acts* xvi. 27. drew out his Sword and would have killed himself, lest he should be put to death in the Room of his Prisoners. These are the Men that *have chosen Sin rather than Affliction*: they would destroy themselves rather than stay for other Men to do it. Are these fit Precedents for a Christian to follow? Art thou fond of imitating these Examples, whose Names and Characters are loaded with divine Contempt in the Book of God, except only the *Jaylor*, who was prevented by divine Mercy from the bloody Fact, and became



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became afterwards a Penitent and a Convert to the *Christian* Faith.

On the other Hand, think of the Holy Prophets and Martyrs, who had the most dreadful Sufferings in view, and rather trusted to Divine Grace for their Support under them, than they would indulge such a guilty Method of Escape; and their Names are crowned with Honour on Earth and in Heaven. *Job* was a very Monument of Misery, had lost his Estate and his Children and all his Comforts, he was smitten with sore Boils from Head to Foot, so that his *Soul*, i. e. *his natural Inclination chose Strangling, and Death rather than Life*, and his Wife became an Instrument of *Satan*; and bid him *curse God and dye*, yet he resisted all these Temptations thro' the victorious Grace of God, he survived all his Sorrows, he became a most honourable Monument of divine Mercy, and a glorious Example of Patience.

Whatso-

Whatsoever thy Condition be, 'tis better to trust thy self in the Hands of divine Mercy in a way of Duty here on Earth, than to rush into the Hands of God's avenging Justice in Hell, in order to escape any of the Terrors of this Life: *Fear not them who can kill the Body and can do no more; but fear him who can destroy both Body and Soul in Hell-fire.*

Besides, Tho' thou seest no way open for thy Relief, yet the infinite Wisdom of God, may open a Door of Escape. He can heal the most deplorable Maladies of the Flesh; he can give Ease to the acutest Pains; he can change thy captive and forlorn Estate, into Peace, Liberty and Joy. Remember the History of *Job*, consider the Patience of that holy Man, and the happy end of his Sufferings thro' the Goodness of the Lord. Art thou in the Hands of bloody Men, the great God has a thousand ways to rescue thee: He  
can

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can change the Purposes of Men and the Nature of savage Beasts, tho' they gape to devour thee, tho' they seem resolv'd and bent upon Cruelty and Violence. Remember *Daniel* in the Lions Den. Remember also the Deliverance of St. *Paul* and St. *Peter* out of Prison. He can give thee a Dismission from Life with his own Hand, and prevent thy Fears and the Rage of Men, or he can arm thy Soul with divine Courage and Strength, to bear up under the sharpest Agonies, and to glorify him even in the Fires: And surely the hope of such a Death in the certain Favour of God is infinitely to be prefer'd before a Death procur'd to our selves, and under a divine Curse.

V. Pretence. *Distress of Soul thro' surrounding Sorrows within and without, the Departure of God, the Agonies of Conscience, and the Fears of eternal Damnation;* these Things become the Spring of many a Temptation

tation to *Self-Murther*. *Saul* was under some such sort of Distress, when *God* was departed from him, and the *Philistines* were coming upon him: He refused to eat *Bread* all that *Day* and all *Night*; and as he stab'd himself the next *Day*, so some suppose he would have starv'd himself the *Day* before. 1 *Sam.* xxviii. 15, 20, 22, 23. *Judas* was in horrible Distress of Conscience when he had betray'd our Lord, and then he betakes himself to the Halter. *I have sinned*, says he, *and betrayed innocent Blood*, I cannot bear my own Thoughts, and I'll dye by my own Hands. And when inward and outward Troubles meet together, as they often do, *Satan* takes the Advantage to propose this dreadful Experiment for Relief. *I am a poor Reprobate Creature for God has left me*, (says a Person under Temptation) *and I am sure I shall never be saved*; *I can't bear the Anguish of my own Mind*, *I cannot bear to live*:  
And



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*And besides, if I destroy my self now, I shall have fewer Sins to answer for than if I liv'd longer, and thus my Guilt and Punishment will be less.*

*Ans.* But how knowest thou that God has utterly left thee and that thou shalt never be saved? 'Tis not God but Satan who tells thee *thou art a Reprobate.* The God of Heaven says no such thing to thee, but he calls thee *to look unto him from the ends of the Earth*, from the borders of Hell and Despair, *that thou mayst be saved*, Isa. xlv. 22. Wilt thou plunge thy self into certain Destruction, and make thy Damnation sure, which is not certain, whilst thou art here in this Life, for *amongst the living there is Hope*? The Son of God stands ready to receive the worst of Sinners to the Arms of his Mercy, *The Blood of Christ can cleanse from all Sin*, 1 Joh. i. 7, 9. *This is a faithful Saying and worthy of all acceptation that Jesus Christ came to save the chief of Sinners*, 1 Tim. i. 15. And  
none

none who ever came to him has been or shall be cast out, *Joh. vi. 37.* Why wilt thou seal and confirm for ever the Sentence of thy own Condemnation? Why wilt thou reject the condescending Grace of the Saviour who delights to relieve the distress'd Sinner? Art thou so rash and desperately wicked, as to employ thy last moments and thy latest Powers in this World, to commit a bold and horrid Sin against the God of all Grace, to preclude thy own Repentance and forbid the Son of God to save thee?

Besides, This is not true that *thy Punishment will be the less if thou destroy thy self.* For Damnation and Punishment in Hell will be the greater and deeper according to the Aggravations of the Sins which have brought the Sinner thither: Now *Self-Murther* is a Sin so heinous and aggravated, that if thou dye impenitently under the Guilt of it, thy Damnation will doubtless be the greater

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er for it, and thy Torments the more intolerable.

'Tis a vain and deceitful Hope that some Persons may have indulg'd under such a Temptation, *viz.* *That God will not impute Sin to them in this matter, because their anguish of Mind is so great; and that if it be a Crime, they will pray for the Pardon of it before they commit it.* This is a meer vain Delusion of the Tempter. Canst thou ever imagine that God will hear such Prayers? *David* was of another Mind, *Psa.* lxvi. 18. *If I regard Iniquity in my Heart, the Lord will not hear me.* If thou comest before God with bloody Resolutions in thy Heart, God will not accept of thy Petitions. *Isa.* i. 15. *When you make many Prayers I will not hear; your Hands are full of Blood!* The Prayer for Pardon of a wilful intended Sin, before it is committed, is a most flagrant and complicated piece of Folly and Impiety, and can  
E never

never find Access even to a Throne of Grace.

VI. The last Pretence I shall mention for the Practice of *Self-Murther*, is this. Some poor melancholy Creature may say, *I am so hurry'd with vile, wicked, blasphemous Thoughts that my Life is a Burden to me, and I would fain be rid of it. I am surrounded and overwhelm'd Night and Day with such a Croud and Tumult of distracting Fears, and dismal Imaginations, that I can hardly get a Moment's Rest. My Soul longs to be quit of this Body, and free from the impetuous, and never ceasing Assault of vexing and disquieting Thoughts. Or perhaps the Soul complains thus, I am importun'd with the endless Buzz and Clamour of Diabolical Suggestions to put an End to my Life; almost every Thing I see is propos'd to me as an Instrument of Self-Destruction, and I fear I shall not be able always*



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*to resist; Sometimes I am tempted to believe if I would but once comply, I should sleep in Silence, and there would be an End of these Disquietudes.*

*Ans<sup>w</sup>.* This is a dangerous Form of the Temptation: When the natural Humors of the Body are ruffled by any Disease, the great Enemy of the Soul is swift to make his Advantage of it. When the Brain is disturbed almost to a degree of Distraction, the Mind has not a full Power over its own Thoughts, Resolutions and Conduct. But let such a one consider, that whether these hurrying wicked Thoughts may arise from the Disorders of the Body or from *Satan*, while thou mournest, hatest and resistest them, they shall not be laid to thy Charge: But when they are knowingly and willingly indulged, they bring great Guilt on the Soul: And if they are once complied with, and put in

Practice, the Guilt is highly aggravated, and perhaps no space left for actual Repentance, nor Grace to practise it.

'Tis better, infinitely better, to fight and wrestle against these Hurries of Mind, by dwelling upon some sacred Sentences of the Word of God. 'Tis incomparably preferable to bear the Fatigue of this Combat, to strive against the Tempter every moment with all thy Powers and with perpetual Prayers, to renounce these Suggestions with utmost Abhorrence, and with equal Vehemence to resist such vehement Assaults as these. Think this with thy self, poor distressed Creature, that if thou yield to the bloody Temptation, and send thy Soul at once into those Regions of Darkness, there unclean Spirits shall have more complete Power over thee, there every Devil shall insult thee as a sentenc'd Criminal, and that with double Fury and with juster Pretences. There thou wilt find  
the

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the *Stroke of thy own Murther* to be so far from being a means of Relief and silent Rest, that it will but plunge thee into Agonies of the same kind, much more terrible and without Hope of Relief. Thou art sensible these are the Suggestions of the wicked Spirit; for that Reason therefore abandon, abhor, detest them, and by the Grace of God maintain a perpetual Opposition till he give thee complete Victory. The Conflict cannot be very long, the Crown and Triumph are eternal. God will not always suffer the Adversary to contend thus with thee, lest thy *Spirit should fail before him, and the Soul which he has made* be lost for ever.

## S E C T. IV.

*Means of Security against this Temptation, or Advices to the Tempted.*

**T**HUS I am led on to the next Enquiry, and that is, *What Course should we take to secure our selves against this bloody Temptation, and By what means may we most successfully resist and vanquish the great Destroyer in such Assaults as these?*

I. Advice. *Maintain upon your Spirit a constant Sense of the crying Sin of Murther. The Voice of Blood cries to the Lord for Vengeance, whoever sheds it. Have a Care of indulging a favourable Thought of Self-Murther; look upon it always with an Eye of Abhorrence, as an unnatural and abominable Iniquity,*  
and



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and as one of the most wretched and hopeless Practices that a Man can be guilty of. Let the Terrors of God which set themselves in array against this bloody Crime, be set before your Minds whensoever this Temptation assaults you.

Give me leave here to borrow a Page or two from a Sermon preach'd long ago on this Subject by the late venerable Dr. *Increase Mather*, of *New-England*, whence also I have derived some other Sentiments in this Discourse. " 'Tis an evil Thing,  
" says he, to speak favourably either of *Self-Murder* or of *Self-Murderers*. There have been  
" those that have undertaken an  
" unhappy Work, to justify *Self-Murder* in some Cases. *Pagan*  
" Writers have celebrated Persons  
" who murder'd themselves: Famous is the Story of *Lucretia*  
" who stab'd herself to secure her  
" Chastity. In what we call, the  
" second Book of the *Maccabees*,

“ we find celebrated an Action of  
 “ one *Rafis*, for which the *Jews*  
 “ cry him up as a *Martyr*; but  
 “ *Austin* censures him for a *Cri-*  
 “ *minal Self-Murthurer* with Reasons  
 “ that cannot be answered.

“ Yea, some *Christians* have com-  
 “ mended those, who to save their  
 “ Chastity, and so themselves from  
 “ Disgrace, have destroyed their own  
 “ Lives. And the crying up of such  
 “ a Fact, has given occasion to ma-  
 “ ny others, to become guilty of  
 “ that unnatural Sin.

“ To *exalt the Persons of Self-*  
 “ *Murthurers to Heaven*, is an Evil  
 “ and a dangerous Practice. We  
 “ should rather leave secret Things  
 “ to God, and to the Discoveries of  
 “ the great Day. Indeed if a Man's  
 “ Life and Conversation were as  
 “ becomes the Gospel, we are not  
 “ positively and absolutely to say,  
 “ that *he is damned*, tho' he killed  
 “ himself: Because we know not  
 “ but that he might be at that time  
 “ under

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“ under the Power of Distraction :  
“ And it is not impossible, but that  
“ God may suffer *Satan* to possess,  
“ and torment and kill the Bodies  
“ of some, whose Souls may yet  
“ be saved in the Day of the Lord.  
“ Yet on the other hand ; if there  
“ were no Sign of Distraction, ap-  
“ pearing in Persons before they  
“ went to destroy themselves, nor  
“ any Evidence of Repentance after  
“ such Attempts, we should not say  
“ *Such Persons are gone to Heaven,*  
“ lest by being over-charitable to  
“ the Dead, we become cruel to  
“ the Living. The asserting that *such*  
“ *Persons are saved,* may occasion  
“ and encourage others to do the  
“ like, and the everlasting Destruc-  
“ tion of Bodies and Souls follow  
“ upon it.

II. Advice. *Maintain the universal Practice of Piety, and of every moral Virtue.* Such Temptations to *Self-Murder* frequently arise from some indulged Iniquity. Men oftentimes

run headlong into Death, with a Design to deliver themselves from some of the natural Consequences of their own Crimes in this World. Now 'tis easier far to watch against those notorious Crimes, and to avoid those Follies, than when they are committed to guard our Minds against the wicked Suggestions that may arise. “ A Man in Innocence  
“ (says a great Writer) has a mighty  
“ Command over himself, above  
“ what he has when Guilt and Fear,  
“ Shame, Vexation and Remorse  
“ have taken a full Possession of  
“ him, have bewilder'd his Thoughts,  
“ scatter'd his Recollection, and in-  
“ feebled his Judgment.

Be *just* in your Dealings with Men, be *sober* and *temperate* in all your personal Conduct. Do not indulge your self in any unlawful and unblest Practices to swell and enlarge your Estate, such as *Gaming* or *Cheating*. Don't run into any Extravagancies of Life, which may waste



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your Estate or your Health, or make Inroads upon your Reason. A Thief, a Cheat and a *Gamester*, a *Covetous Miser*, and a *Spend-thrift*, a *Glutton* and a *Drunkard*, lie much expos'd to such wicked Suggestions of *Self-Murther* in an evil Hour .

Watch against all Enticements to *Luxury* and *Lewdness*. Remember that Riot and Adultery and Midnight Scenes of Debauch often lead the way to Blood. Secret Unclean-ness is the frequent Spring of Mur-ther; and that not only of the un- law-ful Offspring, but of the crimi- nal Parent too, and that by their own Hands. The wanton Person cannot bear the just and publick Shame of his private Iniquities, and he plunges himself headlong into Hell and the Grave in hopes to co- ver his Head from Scandal and the Day Light.

*Love not any thing in this World so much, as that the Loss of it should throw you quite off your Guard, and*

you abandon your self to wild and extravagant Methods of Relief. Let your Affections be so subdu'd and kept in so good Order, that the common Calamities of Life may not utterly confound, tho' they may surprize you. If you place your whole Happiness in any of the Attainments of this World, you expose your selves to this bloody Temptation, when you suffer the Loss of those Idols.

*Set a strict Guard upon all the ruffling and disquieting Passions of human Nature.* Avoid Envy, Resentment, Indignation, Revenge, Fretfulness and Vexation of Spirit. These often lead the unhappy Mind of Man into this Temptation. Persons who break out into violent Passion without Check or Controul, and give a Loose to the wild and unreasonable Disquietudes both of Animal Nature and of the Mind, they expose themselves to be made the Instruments of the Devil in their own Destruction.

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Destruction, or perhaps to destroy themselves without any fresh Influences from the Tempter. Learn the Practice of Meekness, and maintain a strict Hand over your sudden risings of Resentment. The Man of Rage is always near to bloody Practices: The same sort of Passions which excite a Person to give an unhappy and murderous Wound to his Neighbour, may some time or other most unhappily imbrue his Hands in his own Blood.

Remember this, that it has scarce ever been known that a *Man of Temperance, Sobriety and Virtue*, and who in the general Course of his Life has kept his Lusts and Passions under due Restraint, has been much assaulted with this Temptation to *Self-Murder*, except only in Cases of great Bodily Disorders of prevailing Melancholy, and the Loss of Reason.

*The third Direction* I shall copy from Dr. *Mather*.

III. Ad-

III. Advice. *Beware of such Sins*  
 “ *as may provoke the Holy and Right-*  
 “ *eous God to leave thee unto this*  
 “ *horrid Evil.*

“ *Beware of Pride.* When Men  
 “ will rather not be at all, than be  
 “ what God would have them be;  
 “ what cursed Pride is that? (and how  
 “ dangerous a Step toward this Sin?)  
 “ This produces Murmurings at the  
 “ Providence of God; and causes  
 “ People to say. *2 Kings vi. 33. What*  
 “ *should I wait for the Lord any*  
 “ *longer?*

“ *Beware of Self Confidence.* Be  
 “ sensible of thy Weakness; *Let*  
 “ *him that stands take heed lest he*  
 “ *fall.* Be not confident of thy own  
 “ Strength to encounter the Adver-  
 “ sary. If God should let *Satan* loose  
 “ upon thee, he'll be too hard for  
 “ thee.

“ *Beware of an Heart glued to*  
 “ *the World.* When the World is  
 “ a Man's Idol, he will rather part  
 “ with his Life, with his own Hands  
 “ he



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“ he will give it away rather than  
“ part with the World, and be content to live in Poverty.

“ *Beware of Unbelief.* Distrust  
“ not the fatherly Care of thy Heavenly Father. (The Dread of Poverty and starving has been sometimes the Cause of Self Destruction; But 'tis the Effect of Distrust in God.)

“ *Beware of Despair;* 1 Thes. v.  
“ 8. *Putting on for an Helmet the Hope of Salvation.* Say not, *The Day of Grace is over with me.*  
“ Say not, *I have sinned unpardonably!* Vain Imaginations.

“ *Beware of the more heinous Crimes;* which are in a special manner *God-provoking Evils.* The *Sins against Nature* are so. Some that have been guilty of such Sins in secret and have not repented of them, God has for such things left them to this, which is a *Sin against Nature* too!

“ *There are other atrocious Crimes;*  
“ *whereof*

“ whereof this has been the Confe-  
 “ quence. *Judas* and *Pilate*, are  
 “ two fearful Examples of it ! “ (The  
 Sacred History informs us of the  
 tragical End of *Judas*, and the  
 Histories of the Church tell us that  
*Pilate* also destroy'd himself some  
 Years afterward at *Lyons* in *France*.

“ Finally ; *Beware of Backslidings*  
 “ from God, and from good Begin-  
 “ nings in Religion. Remember that  
 “ Word ; *Hos. viii. 3. He hath cast*  
 “ *off the thing that is good ; the*  
 “ *Enemy shall pursue him.* Some  
 “ have left off Prayer in their Fa-  
 “ milies ; left off their Attendance  
 “ on Sermons ; left off godly Exer-  
 “ cises which they have been used  
 “ to perform. Therefore the Ene-  
 “ my of their Souls is let loose up-  
 “ on them ; and he pursues them,  
 “ even to *Self-Destruction*.

IV. Advice. *Suffer not your self*  
*to dwell too much alone.* Do not  
 indulge Solitude and Retirement be-  
 yond the Time that is actually em-  
 ploy'd

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ploy'd in Devotion : Nor let your appointed Seasons of Retired Devotion be long. In such a Case short and frequent Worship is best. Lonesome Hours and melancholy Solitudes, if they are too much indulged, do not only allow the Devil an Opportunity to pursue his Temptations with Vigour, but furnish the bewilder'd Soul with Means and Contrivances and Instruments of Death. Whensoever therefore you are alone, you should be with God.

For the same Reason should a Person under this Temptation avoid all Waters, Precipices, dangerous Places, the Use of Weapons, &c. And remove every thing as far as may be from his Sight that may supply him with the means of *Self-Destruction*.

V. Advice. *As far as possible endeavour to be always employed*; that the Powers of your Nature, both Soul and Body, may be engag'd in some proper Business. Be always doing something, if it be but a  
meer

meer Amusement, a Diversion for the Thoughts : This is far preferable to Idleness. When the Hand and the Mind have nothing to do, the Devil seizes such an Opportunity to employ them both for his own Wicked Purposes.

Do not make the Alehouse or the Tavern a Refuge from your Sorrows, but rather drive out your uneasy Thoughts by some proper Business that may employ them. A Sober Glass or two may be used to refresh Animal Nature and revive a Sinking Spirit at some particular Seasons ; but if you once begin to make strong Liquors your daily and constant Relief, you will be led hereby into a Train of Mischiefs. When you have drunk a little too freely and your Thoughts grow a little confused, you stand then most dreadfully expos'd to all the evil Impressions of the Tempter. Those who may have vanquished huge Temptations while they have been temperate and sober,



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sober, have been fatally betrayed into the deadly Snare by Wine and strong Drink. A Loose, intemperate and unguarded Hour has become an Hour of Blood and Death.

VI. Advice. *Keep not the Devil's Counsel, but discover his Temptations.*

'Tis by no means proper indeed to publish them to the World, but let them be made known to some faithful Minister, or to some wise and judicious Christian. This will go a great way to break the Snare. Entreat the Assistance, the Advice and Prayers of one or two intimate religious Friends for you : This Method, I am persuaded, has been effectual to prevent the Execution of such horrid Purposes. Dr. Mather informs us that one who cut his own Throat acknowledged this before his Expiration; *O that I had told* (said he) *how I was tempted! If I had, I believe, I should never come to this.*

VII. Advice. *Resist the Devil and he will flee from you*, James iv. 7. This is a Divine Counsel. Maintain a perpetual Conflict with him and a vigorous Apposition. Suffer not your self in a melancholy Season to hold a Parley with the Tempter, or rather suffer him not to plead and dispute with you, but abandon and renounce and abhor all his Suggestions. Let him not have the Honour or the Advantage of arguing with you upon so dangerous a Subject in a gloomy and melancholy Hour.

Let your Memory be well stor'd with proper Scriptures, and employ the Word of God in resisting the Devil. This was the Practice of *Luther* under his great and sore Temptations. This has been the successful Instrument of Defence for all the Saints : And this *Sword of the Spirit* will put *Satan* to flight. *Jesus* the Captain of our Salvation has given us himself for a glorious Example ; he defeated the Tempter in all his  
Assaults

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Affaults with these Words *It is written.* Matth. iv. 4, 7, 10.

And I would give this Word of *Advice* to tempted Souls, that they every Day take some particular useful Text of Scripture into their Minds, that they may run to it perpetually as a Refuge, and dwell upon it with a resolute Constancy in the midst of their Hurries of Mind; as a Sailor in the midst of a Storm tyes himself on to the Mast, that he may not be driven off into the Sea by the Violence of the Winds and the Waves. Some divine Word of Promise in such a dark and dismal Day will be as a sacred Anchor of Hope to the poor Weather-beaten Spirit, that is tost to and fro upon the Billows of this Temptation.

VIII. Advice. But after all, the most effectual and successful Relief under this Temptation is *Faith and Prayer.* *Be frequent and importunate in Prayer to God.* Fly to the Throne of Grace whenso-

ever you are assaulted, that you may obtain Mercy and find Grace to help you in this time of Need. Heb. iv. ult. Entreat the Aids of your Creator against his and your Enemy. Trust in his Mercy, and seek his Power to resist the Tempter: The Holy Spirit of God is superior to all the Spirits of Hell: Depend on his Aid, and thus by Faith and Prayer quench the fiery Darts of the Evil one.

Commit thy self afresh by earnest Requests to the Protection of the Son of God; he is Almighty and compassionate, and the appointed Guardian of tempted Souls; being shelter'd by Faith in the hands of the Saviour, Satan shall not pluck thee out of his hands. Christ has conquered the Adversary, and led him Captive in his Chains, nor can he stir beyond the Limits of his Permission. If the Enemy pursue thee, make hast and betake thee to Jesus as to a City of Refuge: His Name Jesus assures us  
that



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that he is and will be a *Saviour*:  
*This Name of the Lord is a strong  
Tower, the tempted Soul flies to it  
and finds Safety. They that have  
known this Name, will put their trust  
therein.*

Remember, O poor tempted Souls,  
that our Lord *Jesus Christ* has been  
*tempted himself*; and that in the  
same manner too *on the Pinnacle of  
the Temple*, he knows how to *succour  
them that are tempted*, Heb. ii. 18.  
He can teach you how to put *Sa-  
tan* to flight.

Beg that the Lord your Saviour  
would secure you from the Hurries  
of your own Thoughts: Run to his  
Protection hourly being conscious  
of your own Weakness. Plead with  
him to keep you from this *unrea-  
sonable and comprehensive Temptati-  
on* that aims at the Ruin of Soul  
and Body at once: And tho' you  
may think it long to wait and pray  
under such a sore Conflict, yet re-  
solve to continue at the Mercy-seat  
and

and go on praying and waiting :  
*The needy and distressed Soul shall not always be forgotten ; the expectation of the Poor shall not perish for ever, Psal. ix 18.* In the proper and appointed Time the Lord will awake for your Deliverance, and give you a glorious Victory. The Shepherd of *Israel* may permit a beloved Sheep to be worried by the roaring Lion, but the Sheep that keeps near to the Great Shepherd shall not be given up to the Mouth of the Destroyer.

These are the chief *Advices* of a *spiritual* or *intellectual* Kind which at present occur to my Thoughts, and which I have here propos'd to the Reason and Conscience of Men, as proper Means to secure them from the dangerous and dreadful Practice of *Self-Murther* : And I am well assured that if such Counsels as these had been followed, we should not have heard of such frequent and bloody Instances of Persons in the full

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full Exercise of Reason putting an End to their own Lives, as our weekly News-Papers inform us of.

But it must be confest that where this Temptation dwells upon the Mind, and hangs heavy upon the Spirits, where the Soul is vexed and hurried with it from Day to Day, or where there is a melancholy Temper of Spirit indulging gloomy Apprehensions both of things present and things to come, there is much ground to suspect that *Reason is clouded*, that the *Humors of the Body are discomposed*, and that *Animal Nature is under the Power of some Distemper*. In this Case all the Directions that are applied to Reason and Conscience are likely to become useless and ineffectual without the Skill of the Physician and the Application of proper Medicines to correct the peccant Humours of the Body. Friends and Kindred and those which dwell in the same House should make wise Observations,  
F where

where they suspect a Person to labour under the Power of such a Malady, or to indulge such a Temptation: For many times they are better Judges than the Person who is thus afflicted and tempted.

And while they are using *proper Remedies* to remove the Disorders of Nature, they may also take seasonable Hours to set before the Mind of a melancholy Creature such *Considerations* drawn out of the several parts of this little Treatise, as are most suitable to the present Case: Let them join their *heartly Prayers* together with all the friendly *Methods* of treatment to soften and relieve their distress of Spirit: No harsh or severe usage from their Friends is proper in this Case: Bind up the Broken-hearted and comfort them that they may not be unwilling to live. Make every thing easie round about them in this World, and encourage them to hope in the Mercies of God for Eternal Life, if they



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do not wilfully fling themselves out of the reach of his Covenant and all the appointed Methods of his pardoning Love. Treat them gently with all the united influences of Advice and Medicine. By daily Prayer commit them to the healing Power and the saving Mercy of that God in whose Hands are all the Springs of Nature and Grace. And may the God of all Grace condescend to hear and to deliver the Lives of the Tempted from such a dismal Period! May he rescue them by his Mercy from the Power of the Tempter, that they may not plunge their Souls into an eternal and unchangeable State at so dreadful an Uncertainty! Dreadful indeed, wherein their surviving Relatives can find but little room for Comfort or Hope concerning them, except what arises from the Supposition of their Loss of Reason.

## S E C T. V.

*Admonitions to those who have  
been rescued from this Tempta-  
tion.*

**W**E have good reason to believe, that there are Multitudes in every Age, who in some Season of their Lives have been assaulted with this Temptation, and have been delivered from the Power of it by some interposing Methods of Divine Providence or special Grace. Surely such Persons will be ready to receive a *Word of Admonition* how to behave themselves after so merciful an Escape from Death and Hell.

1. *Admonition.* Think sometimes with your selves how nigh you have been to the Borders of the Pit, and what rich Grace preserved you from plung-

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plunging into Destruction. Think how dreadfully near you were to Death and to the Regions of eternal Sorrow, and what an Arm of Almighty Mercy hath rescued you. Say thus to your selves, " I who  
" now behold the Light of this  
" World, and am in the Land of Hope,  
" might have been roaring under  
" Agonies of Spirit in the Land of  
" Darknes and Despair, if the great and  
" blessed God had not prevented it.

Perhaps your Conscience was awakened and the Temptation broken, before it prevail'd so far as to fix the fatal Resolve of your own Death, or when you were nearest to it Opportunity was wanting. Perhaps there was some Person came happily into the Room at the Time of your bloody Purpose, or you were not then furnished with some proper Instrument of Death: Perhaps you were prevented from finishing the fatal Stroke when you had begun it, or the murderous Attempt of your Hands was

not so strong and so successful as your wretched Heart wish'd and designed it : Perhaps your Heart relented as you were just going to give Death to your selves, or some sudden turn of Thought, some happy word of Scripture was brought into your Mind, that forbid the Mischief and rescued your Soul. Let the Method of Prevention be what it will, it is certain God was there, Divine Providence was there, Divine Mercy was there: *Our God is the God of Salvation: to God the Lord belong all the Issues or Escapes from Death*, Psal. lxxviii. 20. Stand therefore and wonder at the Riches of Divine Grace, and give God the Glory of thy Rescue from the Arms of Death and the Flames of Hell. Amongst thy solemn Thanksgivings for received Mercies recount this illustrious Instance of it. With great Humility fall down before the Throne of God, and with thy warmest Devotions and Gratitude appear



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appear there at his Foot as an humble Monument of his surprizing Kindness. Remember the nearer thou wert to Destruction, the greater and more evident is the Mercy of thy Deliverance. Let thy *Soul and all that is within thee* join to praise the *Name of the Lord* thy Deliverer.

II. *Admonition.* Take Shame to your self in the Sight of God for every murtherous Thought, every degree of Compliance with this Temptation. Repent deeply, O Sinner, if thou hast indulged any bloody Purpose in thy Heart, and cry for divine Forgiveness. Confess thy Sin at the Mercy Seat, and seek Pardon thro' the atoning Sacrifice of the Son of God. Remember that the *Blood of Christ cleanses us from all Sin*, even from the Crimes of Murther and Blood. God has snatched thee from the Mischief of thy own Hands, lift up those Hands to Heaven to implore pardoning Grace in the

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Name of *Jesus* the great Reconciler : Repent and receive the Blessing.

III. *Admonition.* Meditate on the long *Train of Benefits* derived from this Deliverance, and survey the *weighty Obligations* that are laid on your Soul thereby. Say thus to your selves, “ Every Hour of Rest and  
“ Peace that I enjoy is the Effect  
“ of this peculiar Mercy, this di-  
“ vine Rescue from Death. Every  
“ Sermon that I hear, every Season  
“ of Grace that is afforded me, is a  
“ special Favour from that God who  
“ delivered me from this Destructi-  
“ on. Every Opportunity that I  
“ have of bending my Knees before  
“ the Throne of Grace, every com-  
“ fortable Promise that I read in the  
“ Gospel, every Beam of Mercy  
“ that I see, and every Word of  
“ Hope that I hear, are all owing  
“ to that happy Hour of my Escape  
“ from the Violence of my own  
“ Hands. Wretch that I was! I was  
“ cutting off all my Hopes, I was  
“ can-

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“ cancelling my Name out of all  
“ the Promises, and putting my  
“ self beyond the Reach of them  
“ all. I was sending my self into  
“ a World where there is no Gos-  
“ pel, no Promises, no Prayer, no  
“ Word of Salvation, no Beam of  
“ Mercy. For ever adored be the  
“ Compassion of my God, that over-  
“ ruled all my wicked Thoughts, and  
“ at last gave me Victory over this  
“ dreadful Temptation! And Blessed  
“ of the Lord be those Relatives, those  
“ Friends, that were the happy In-  
“ struments in the Hand of God to  
“ break this fatal Snare!

Then think of the weighty Obligations that lie on you to love and serve the Lord with all your Powers. Say, “ *What shall I render to the Lord for all his Benefits?*” He hath delivered me from the  
“ Gates of the Grave when I was  
“ just ready to leap into it, while  
“ the Gates of Hell stood open to  
“ receive my Soul. He is indeed

F 5.

the

“ the *God of my Life*, for he has  
 “ not only given me Life at first,  
 “ and preserved it by the com-  
 “ mon Bounty of his Providence,  
 “ but he has rescued my Life out  
 “ of the Hands of the Tempter when  
 “ he would have persuaded me to  
 “ destroy it. O may every Moment  
 “ of this rescued Life be some way  
 “ or other devoted to his Fear and  
 “ Honour! *Lord, what wilt thou*  
 “ *have me do*, to make it mani-  
 “ fest that I am entirely thine? I  
 “ would fain shew to my Friends  
 “ who were acquainted with my  
 “ dreadful Danger, that the Vows  
 “ and the Bonds of God are strong  
 “ upon me, and that this Deliverance  
 “ was not bestowed on me in vain.

IV. *Admon.* At some special Sea-  
 sons make an Enquiry what you have  
 done for God or for the Welfare of  
 your own Soul since your Deliver-  
 ance. In the successive course of  
 Time, when a new Year begins, or  
 when you take notice of your re-  
 turning



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turning Birth-day, or when the annual Season of this Deliverance returns which is like another Birth-day or a new beginning of Life, ask your Conscience this solemn Question, " Have I improved my Moments " and my Mercies answerable to the " infinite Obligations I lye under ? " It may be you had done little for the Honour of God in the World before that Time ; What have you done since ? It may be you had never been diligent to make your Calling and Election sure before ; And are they now made sure ? Enquire of your own Souls and say, " Some " Months or Years are past since the " Lord has recover'd me from the " most pernicious Snare of the Tempter, and do I still continue his " Slave in another Form, bound in " the Chains of my own Lusts and " Passions ? Surely I was at that " Time very unfit to dye ; Have I " now attain'd a greater-Fitness ?

Perhaps you had then acquir'd but little Acquaintance with the Grace of *Christ*, with experimental Religion and practical Godliness: And are you still a Stranger to *Christ*, a Stranger to the pleasure of secret Religion and to Holiness in the Power and Life of it? You stood in that Day on the very Borders of Hell and Destruction, the God of Mercy secured you from the Pit: Is your Face now set Heavenward? And are you arrived within the Hopes and Confines of Heaven? Have you any comfortable or settled Expectation of that *Inheritance of the Saints in Light*? Your Mind perhaps was vain and carnal, and made the Pleasures, the Profits, or the Honours of this Life the Objects of your chief Pursuit, and your only Happiness; How stands the Temper of your Spirit now? Is it refin'd? Is it exalted to pursue diviner Interests and Hopes? or think you that God rescued you from the Grave for no other Purpose but to eat and drink and live a  
 I brutal

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brutal Life, to grovel in the Mire still, and to feed upon the Dust or follow after the Wind? God has with-held you from executing the Devil's sentence of Death on your self; And are you content still to live under the Guilt and Condemnation of Sin in the Sight of God, and wait only till his Providence execute his divine Sentence upon you? Is this, O Sinner, is this all the design for which thy Reprieve was given thee? Was it not that thou mightest seek a compleat Pardon, and obtain a Right to Heaven thro' the Grace of the Gospel? And wilt thou go on to abuse the Compassion and the Long-suffering of God? Shall that Soul perish at last which has had so loud a Warning, and which has been rescued from the very Jaws of the Pit by the Hand of divine Love?

Or it may be thou hadst made a Profession of Religion long before the Season of thy Temptation, and thou hadst *backsliden from the Lord-Days*

*Days without number.* His Hand has saved thee from present Death; But is thy Soul recover'd from its great Backslidings? One would think it should be a very awakening Hour when thou wert just within the Verge of Hell, and *pluck'd as a Brand out of the Burning*: Art thou returned to thy old Drowsiness, and fallen asleep again in careless Security? How wilt thou lift up thy Face before God when he shall make at last a solemn Enquiry; "What hast thou  
 " done with that Life, with those  
 " Months, with those Years? What  
 " hast thou done with those Sermons  
 " and those Seasons of Grace that I  
 " gave thee since the Day of thy rescue from thy own bloody Purposes, and from the Assaults of the  
 " Tempter?"

V. *Admon.* Search into the Causes and Springs of this Temptation which hath assaulted you, and watch against all those things that have had any Tendency toward it or any Share in it.

Search



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Search into your own Heart, see what secret Seeds of Iniquity lurk there which may have grown up to this dangerous Height. Read over the 2<sup>d</sup> and 3<sup>d</sup> *Advices* of the foregoing *Section*, see if any of the vicious Practices or the criminal Neglects there mention'd have been indulged by you, which might lay a Foundation for this Mischief. These are so many Avenues which the Adversary hath found to insinuate his wicked Suggestions, and convey them to your Heart: Watch against all these Avenues of that great Destroyer, and set a Guard on your self all round from the Assaults of the like Temptation in time to come.

VI. *Admon.* Since you have found by dangerous Experience how unsafe you are in your own Hands, and that your Life and Soul are not secure there, commit your self daily by repeated Exercises of Faith and importunate Prayer into the Hands of *Christ*: His great Office and divine Employment

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ment is to take Care of the Souls which are committed to him, and those who come unto him shall in no wise be cast out. John vi. 37. The holy Apostle knew whom he had believed, or trusted in, and was assured that he was able to keep what he had committed to him against the great Day, 2 Tim. i. 12.

By holy Devotions rise often up to Heaven, dwell in the secret Place of the most High, abide under the Shadow of the Almighty. Say to the Lord, Be thou my Refuge and my Fortrefs, My God, in thee will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the Snare of the Fowler. He shall give his Angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways. The Lion and the Dragon shalt thou trample under thy Feet. Thou shalt call and God will answer thee: He will be with thee in Trouble, he will deliver and honour thee. With long Life he will satisfy thee and shew thee his Salvation, Psal. xc. 1, 2. &c.

Thus

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Thus joyn the two excellent Advices of our Saviour together, *watch and pray daily that ye enter not into Temptation*, and wait for Success from Heaven: *May the God of Peace sanctify you throughout, and may your Spirit, Soul and Body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

S E C T. VI.

*Cautions against all Approaches to Self-Murther, (viz) Intemperance, Duelling, &c.*

**I**F I were to add any thing to this Discourse concerning the Sin of *Self-Murther*, I think it might not be utterly improper to put in a *Caveat* against those Practices which have a Tendency to this Sin, and which in some measure partake of the Guilt of it tho' the Sinner himself does not intend Violence against his own Life.  
Give

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Give me leave then to name a few of these *Practices*, which when set in this Light, will appear highly criminal, how innocent soever they are esteemed by thoughtless Men.

I. The first of this kind that I shall mention is *Intemperance, and an unguarded Indulgence of all the Appetites of Nature and the Sensualities of the animal Life.*

Frequent Feasting to the full on rich and savoury Dishes, gratifying the Palate with varieties of high-season'd Food, and loading the Stomach with daily Excesses, is one way of destroying Life.

'Twas a most just and happy Censure that a late ingenious Writer casts on the *Gluttony of a modern Meal*, as he expresses it. " Would not one of  
" the ancient Philosophers think a  
" Man mad, had he seen him devour  
" Fowl, Fish, and Flesh ; swallow  
" Oil and Vinegar, Wines and Spices,  
" throw down Sallads of twenty different Herbs, Sauces of an hundred  
" Ingre-



Sect. VI. *to Self-Murther.* 115

“ Ingredients, Confections and Fruits  
“ of numberless Sweets and Flavours?  
“ What unnatural motions and coun-  
“ terferments must such a medley of  
“ Intemperance produce in the Body?  
“ For my part, when I behold a fa-  
“ shionable Table set out in all its  
“ Magnificence, I fancy that I see  
“ Gouts and Dropsies, Fevers and Le-  
“ thargies, with other innumerable  
“ Distempers lying in Ambuscade a-  
“ mong the Dishes †.

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† “ Nature (saith this Author) delightain the most  
“ plain and simple Diet. Were I to consider my Read-  
“ ers as my Patients, and to prescribe such a kind  
“ of Temperance as is accommodated to all Persons,  
“ and such as is particularly suitable to our Climate  
“ and way of living, I would copy the following  
“ Rules of a very eminent Physician. *Make your whole*  
“ *repast out of one Dish. If you indulge in a second, avoid*  
“ *drinking any thing strong till you have finished your*  
“ *Meal; at the same time abstain from all such Sauces as*  
“ *are not the most plain and simple.* A Man could not  
“ well be guilty of Gluttony if he stuck to these few  
“ obvious and easy Rules. In the *first* case there  
“ would be no variety of Tastes to solicit his Palate  
“ and occasion Excess; nor in the *second* any artifi-  
“ cial Provocatives to relieve Satiety and create a false  
“ Appetite.” Thus that great and approved Writer  
Mr. Addison.

Surely

Surely this Author would agree that the Indulgence of a riotous Appetite in such various and improper Food as disturbs and oppresses Nature, inflames the Blood, and fills the Body with Distempers, has a plain Tendency to *Self-Destruction*: and yet how many are there that call themselves *Christians*, who must fall under this Accusation, and cannot excuse their Guilt? Have we never heard a Person say, “ *I know this Dish will make me sick, yet I cannot forbear it?* ” “ *Or I have frequently found this Food, or these Sauces are hurtful for me, and yet I’ll venture on them?* ” There’s a common Proverb that charges this sort of Sensuality with the Guilt of *Self-Murder*, *Such a Man digs his Grave with his Teeth*: And tho’ he feels his Health languish and his Body sinking toward the Dust, yet he goes on to *dig his Grave with his Teeth* daily, till at last he tumbles into it. The God of Life is the Judge of Men, and he hath

hath a terrible Charge against such wilful Transgressors: For Intemperance is a slow Poison.

'Tis the same sort of Crime when Persons get a *Habit of Drinking*, and from a Cup of strong Drink which might refresh Nature they grow up to Quarts and Gallons: From a few moderate Glasses at first they learn in time to swallow the Contents of whole Bottles. They swill Wine without Measure, and when the common and natural Juice of the Grape is made so habitual and customary that it ceases to be strong enough to support their Spirits, then they have recourse to Brandy and other intoxicating Liquors: The Art of the *Chymist* is employ'd to extract burning Spirits out of various Materials: These make a fearful Waste of the Vitals, and destroy all the inward Springs of Nature and Life. Many a poor feeble Creature has been deluded into Death and the Grave by the false and flattering Supports which they imagine they had received

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received from their daily Drams : Where this custom prevails, 'tis most pernicious and fatal : The Bottle of Cordials is perpetually frequented : They want it almost hourly ; the Stomach is pall'd, the natural Appetite to Food is ruin'd, the Pulse continues to beat a few Weeks or a few Days by the Force of their beloved Liquors, and then they drop into the Pit. 'Tis strange that Persons should make such haste to their own Destruction, especially when Friends and Physicians around them have given them so many Warnings, and would fain call them back from their precipitate and fatal Career to the Grave !

There are many of the *Wealthy* and *Polite* Parts of Mankind, and too many of the *fairer Pieces* of Human Nature who are betrayed into this Snare, and ruin'd beyond Relief, without suspecting the Guilt of what they daily practise. All the Art of Medicine labours in vain to rescue Life from the prevailing Force of Diseases,



eases, where the thoughtless Patient is perpetually nourishing the Disease and takes part with Death against the Physician. Their Conduct is a Medley of Inconsistencies; They pray for Life, and make no Conscience of sinning against their own Prayers. Little do those unhappy Creatures think how they violate the sixth Commandment of the Law of God while they are sipping their deadly Potions: And tho' they are often admonish'd, yet they will not believe, but go on to drink and dye.

And as for the *lowest Rank of Mankind*, they send themselves out of the World at all Ages in haste by these hot and fiery Liquors. Little young Wretches are taught the use of Drams in the most early Parts of Life, and begin to destroy their Nature betimes. If they survive Childhood, they become a sickly Race and useless Pieces of the Nation. The elder People of that Rank reel in our Streets till the Grave receives them: And unless the  
Venders

Venders of these strong Liquors be in some Measure limited, and their mortal Trade restrained, 'tis certain the Churchyards must be enlarged to receive the Dead. If a Tombstone could be well afforded for every such Sinner, the Inscription of it ought to be this, *Here lyes a Self-Murtherer.*

II. Another instance wherein some Persons thoughtlessly approach to the Guilt of *Self-Murther* is, that *when they feel Nature impair'd, and Distemper growing apace upon them, yet they obstinately refuse the most necessary Means of Health and Recovery.*

Some are so passionately engaged in the Pursuit of Riches or Honours, that in Opposition to all the Warnings of Death which they receive both from their own Disorders of Body and the kind Admonition of Friends, yet they will fatigue their Flesh daily, waste their best Spirits, and wear out Life apace to accomplish their secular Designs: Tho' it often happens that before they compassed their End  
they

they dye; their Schemes are broken, their Projects vanish; and they are gone to appear before the Judgment Seat of *Christ*, to give an account how their Life was spent, and why they died so soon.

'Tis granted indeed that there may be some loud and plain calls of Providence to risque our Health and even Life it self on some special occasions. And when Persons of a lower rank amongst Mankind must labour for daily Food to support themselves and their Families, 'tis very hard to determine precisely how far they should obey the craving Necessities of their Household by exposing themselves to great Inconveniences and Dangers in their daily Labours, or how far they should confine themselves in a medicinal way for the recovery of their Strength. In such cases every Man must put all Circumstances into the Balance, and by seeking divine Direction and consulting his Friends he must determine for himself according

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ing

ing to his best Prudence: And if Death seizes him in the course of his Labour and Duty, he resigns up his Life to Providence, and his Soul into the Hands of a faithful Creator and Redeemer.

But my design'd Reproof lyes here (*viz*) when it is evident that Persons are under no such Necessity, and they have no plain Call either from God or Men to waste Nature and Health at so prodigal a rate, yet they wilfully lavish their Strength and throw away Life it self in the Pursuit of things that are by no means necessary in their Circumstances. This sort of Conduct shews that their Hearts are set too eagerly upon this World, and they precipitate themselves rashly into Eternity by too vehement a Desire of the things of Time.

There is another way also whereby Persons may be said to hasten their own Death; and that is when Sickness comes upon them, and yet out of meer Humour and Obstinacy they



renounce all the Aids of Medicine. They refuse the friendly Touch of the Lancet, because *they were never let Blood in their Lives, nor their Fathers before them.* They will not endure a Blister to be raised in the most important Case that requires it, for *I am resolved* (say they) *never to be flead alive, but will go to the Grave with a whole Skin.*

Or perhaps from the silly Squeamishness of a nice Imagination they set themselves against those necessary Medicines which are the only visible Methods of Relief. Like Children they refuse a Potion because 'tis bitter or nauseous; and yet they can neither be bribed nor flatter'd, as Children are, into a Self-denial in this case, nor be perswaded by all the force of Reason to displease their Palates and save their own Lives. Such a humorous Conduct will afford their departing Souls but small Comfort in the Reflection; " I went on  
 " in a course of resolute Sickness  
 G 2                                      " and

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“ and Death, because the Doses of  
“ Physick were bitter to the Taste, and  
“ the Methods of Health were trou-  
“ blefome or painful.

I know some will be ready to suppose this a needless Page in the Book, for they can hardly conceive any part of Mankind can be so obstinately foolish, as to lose Health and Life in this manner. I wish there might be no future Examples of this kind found in the World; but what has been, may be: Human Nature is like it self, and all these Follies of our Species have their Rounds; the Repetition of them is too often seen in every Age, tho' some of my Readers may not have happen'd to meet with them. Such as have been train'd up in a humorous Niceness from the Cradle, who have been indulged in the Strength of their Wills, and never been taught to think, nor to use their Understandings, are in a fair Way to remain in a state of Childhood all their Lives, and to dye for want of learning to obey Reason. III.

III. *An ambitious Pursuit of Glory in such Feats of Activity and Strength as throw Life into the most imminent Hazard, this is another frequent Method of Self-Destruction.*

There are some Persons who assume to themselves so much Pride and Vanity from the Firmness of their Constitution, or the Agility of Limbs that God their Creator has bestowed upon them, that they are fond of gaining publick Applause upon this Account. They enter into foolish Contracts, and they lay wild Wagers of their Strength or Swiftneſs: They impose on themselves most excessive Burdens, they labour beyond all their Strength, they engage to run or ride most unreasonable Stages in a few Hours, or endure some incredible Hardships and Fatigues. Hereby they oftentimes break all their boasted Powers of Nature and bring themselves in haste to the Grave; and they leave their Names behind them upon the Lists of Folly among the

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Men who have sold their Lives for a Trifle.

There have been others who have bound themselves by Wagers to more brutal and more guilty Follies, and their Death hath been highly criminal and unpity'd. One has gloried in the prodigious Power of his Appetite to devour Flesh, and the equal Capacity of his Stomach for the Stowage of a most unreasonable Load of Eatables. Another hath boasted of his Ability to drain whole Gallons of common Liquors dry, or to swallow down amazing Quantities of stronger Drink. Such Wretches are only fit to enter the Lists with Bears or Swine. It is a mortal Shame to human Nature that such Creatures should belong to it, and that any other Men should become their Rivals. Some of these have dy'd upon the Spot and been made publick Martyrs to their own Madness. Others having their Natures overpowered with these Extravagances, have languished



languished and sunk down to Death by Degrees. But I doubt the Holy and Righteous Sentence of God will excuse neither one nor t'other of them from the Guilt of *Self-destroyers*.

IV. The *Bloody Trade of Prize-fighting* is another vile Practice, wherein the Flesh and Limbs and Lives of Men are willingly exposed to the Strokes of Clubs and Swords, without any Pretence of Necessity or any Call from divine Providence. What is it but a degree of *Self-Murther*, when Men out of Frolick or Humour, out of low Ambition of Honour or for the Gain of a little Pelf, challenge each other to these brutal Combats? Their Flesh is hack'd and hew'd with many a Wound, their Limbs are bruised and batter'd sorely, their Blood is spilt upon a publick Stage, and Life it self sometimes pays for their Folly.

I don't suppose indeed that this sort of *Combatants* will ever come within the Reach of Conviction by any thing that I can write: They are

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generally too thoughtless of God and Religion, too senseless of all that is serious, to look into Treatises that relate to Sin or Duty. But methinks I would not have such bloody Practices encouraged by drawing in any Spectators that ever pretend to Godliness. I confess I am not acquainted with any Persons that make the Sight of these *Combats* a part of their Entertainment, but it would be well if such things were utterly cashier'd and renounced by a Nation that professes *Christianity*.

Did we but read with what just and severe Reproof the Primitive Fathers of the Church used to inveigh against the barbarous, cruel and murdering Spectacles of the Gladiators at *Rome*, we should find that in their Sense they were so highly offensive to God, that it was disgraceful for any Person who bore the Name of a *Christian* to appear at such Entertainments: And I persuade my self we should be ready to join with these venerable

venerable Ancients in an Endeavour as far as lyes in us to root out this Practice. Those who go to behold them as a matter of Delight, and support and encourage them by their Contribution to such criminal Combats, are in some Sense Partakers of their Guilt.

I might add also, that if we feast our Eyes with such inhuman Sights as these, it makes Blood and Wounds too familiar to us, it sets human Flesh and Life at too vile and cheap a Rate, it hardens the Temper by degrees, and is ready to induce something of Cruelty and brutal Roughness into a Constitution that before might have much of Humanity in it.

VI. *The wicked Pride of Dueling, when Men stab and shoot each other by Contract and Consent,* has much of the Guilt of *Self-Murther* belonging to it.

Is it not a strange Madness for Men who are called *Christians*, and who profess to be Followers of the meek

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and holy *Jesus*, to challenge one another to give or receive present Death for a little common Affront, and to resolve to kill or be killed for a trifling pique of Honour? If profest Gamesters will quarrel about the Cast of a Dye, or if two known Adulterers will contend about the Possession or the Reputation of one shameless Woman, and resolve to decide their Quarrels by the Sword or Pistol, let them go on to dye like *Atheists* as they live: Let them be convinced of their Madness at the great Tribunal of God, who would hearken to no Conviction from Men: They deserve to feel the Terrors of that awful Being in t'other World whom they renounced in this. But let not a Man pretend to the Name of a Disciple of *Christ*, and run so directly counter to the Pattern and the Laws of his holy Lord and Master.

How is it possible these Combatants can excuse themselves from the Guilt of *Wilful-Murther* in the Sight  
of



of God? Do they not go into the Field to meet a willful Death, or to give it? Do they not freely expose their Breasts to each other's murdering Weapons, and mutually yield up their Lives either to the more *happy* or the more *skilful* push of the Sword? Doth not one of them frequently fall and dye on the bloody Spot of Ground? And sometimes both of them are wounded mortally. Is it not the real Language of their Fury, *I'll send him to the Devil, or he shall send me thither?* And which soever of them is slain, I think 'tis evident that each of them in the sight of God is guilty (at least intentionally) of a double Murther. Each Duellist offers up his own Life to the other's Weapon of Destruction, and invites his Neighbour to slay him while each endeavours to slay his Neighbour. Here's *intended Murther* on both sides; this is Guilt of a double Dye, and the *Lord will bring upon them both the Day of Vengeance*

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and destroy them with a double Destruction, as the Prophet *Jeremy* expresses it, *Chap. xvii. verse 18. Their own and their Brother's Blood shall be dreadfully requir'd at the Hand* of both of them by that God who is the Avenger of Murther: For I fear there are but few of these Criminals that practise sincere Repentance, even if Time and Space be allowed for it.

But you will say, " Must a Man  
" bear all Affronts and have no Re-  
" paration? Must he have the Lye  
" given him and take it tamely?  
" Must he be called a *Fool* or a *Sot*  
" without any Satisfaction? Our  
" Laws have made no Provision for  
" the Injuries done to a Man's Ho-  
" nour, and therefore I'll revenge  
" the Injury my self.

*Answ.* 1. For any important Injuries done to a Man's Honour, Credit and Reputation in the World, whereby he sustains real Damage, there are some Provisions in the Law: But for giving the *Lye*, or call-

ing a Man's Understanding in question, these are supposed to be such common inconsiderable things, that it was not worth while to make Laws about them. Let a Man live so as to render all these Imputations incredible; then those Names of Reproach will dye, and do him no hurt. Let him avoid the Company where he is so abused; and put himself out of the Way of Reproach and Temptation for time to come.

*Ans<sup>w</sup>. 2.* What if our Laws have not provided *Reparation* for every little Affront, because it was thought below the Notice of Governors, yet the Law hath provided a *Gibbet* for him that escapes the *Sword* in a Duel wherein he hath killed his Neighbour. The Law of the Land calls this *Murther*, and condemns and punishes the *Murtherer* by a shameful manner of Death. Now because you have been called a *Liar* or a *Sot*, will you therefore resolve either to be *stabb'd* or to be *hanged*? What  
 strange

strange Reasoning is this for a Man who pretends to the sense and Education of a Gentleman?

*Ans.* 3. But let it be further observed that the Law of *Christ* requires Meekness and Patience under many Injuries: The Law of *Christ* forbids all Revenge and Murther: His Law absolutely prohibits you to kill your Neighbour, or to expose your self to willful Death on the account of such Trifles. Come learn to bridle your Passions and mortifie your Pride, and then such Reproaches will not sit so heavy upon you.

But if you are obstinately resolved to dye for a Point of Honour, go, rush into the other World by the Sword or by the Gibbet, and make your *Appeal* for injured Honour to the most righteous and supreme Tribunal of Justice there: God is a just Judge; he weighs every Circumstance to a Grain in a Divine Ballance: but



but you will find to your Terror, that the Court of Heaven will be so far from approving your Conduct, that you will be sentene'd to everlasting Infamy and Shame, as a Punishment of your Pride: You will be doomed to immortal Agonies of Conscience and the Wrath of that God whose Laws you have impiously broken: And notwithstanding all your fancy'd Self-defence, you will be treated like a Man that is guilty of his own and his Brother's Blood.

Give me Leave to finish this Head with a few Sentiments borrowed from Mr. *Collier's* Discourse of *Duelling*, in the first Volume of his *Essays*, which I would recommend to the Perusal of those who may be exposed to the Danger and Temptation of such Combats. “ It is  
 “ great Pity, saith he, that Men who  
 “ have such Opportunities for Sense,  
 “ should be entangled in so monstrous an Absurdity! That those  
 “ who

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“ who might be the Ornament of  
“ their Age and Defence of their  
“ Country should make themselves  
“ a Misfortune to both. Perhaps  
“ the Danger of the Adventure may  
“ make them think it honourable:  
“ But to risque the Main (i. e. *The*  
“ *Concerns of Life and Eternity*)  
“ without Reason or Warrant is  
“ meer Rashness: 'Tis to be more  
“ stupid than brave. If a Man should  
“ leap from a Garret, or vault down  
“ the Monument, do you imagine  
“ he would leave the Memory of  
“ a Hero behind him? Religion  
“ will not endure the Duelling Prin-  
“ ciple, any more than all the He-  
“ resies since *Simon Magus*. 'Tis  
“ a Principle so full of Pride and  
“ Passion, and Revenge; so tempestu-  
“ ous and absurd; so absolutely un-  
“ allied to Reason and good Na-  
“ ture, that polish'd Heathenism would  
“ be asham'd on't. In a Word, 'tis  
“ as contrary to the Tendency and  
“ Temper

“ Temper of Christianity, as *Hobbs's*  
 “ Creed is to the Apostles, as Light  
 “ is to Darkness, as God is to the  
 “ Devil.

Perhaps you imagine you must part  
 with the Character of a *Gentleman*  
 or a *Man of Honour* if you refuse a  
 Challenge: But “ fear it not. As long  
 “ as the Laws are on our Side, the  
 “ Heraldry is all safe. And if it were  
 “ otherwise, let us remember we  
 “ are Christians. If there happens a  
 “ Competition between these two  
 “ Pretensions, let us drop the *Gentle-*  
 “ *man* and keep the *Christian*; for  
 “ he is a Person of the best Quality.  
 “ But you are afraid your Rival  
 “ will post you up for a Coward,  
 “ and what then? Why then you  
 “ should mind it no more than the  
 “ railing of a Man in a Fever, or  
 “ a Proclamation from *Bedlam*.”  
 Thus far that ingenious Writer.

But the Case is far different if  
 your Enemy *draw* upon you and  
 assault

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assault you: For then your first Business is to keep within the Compass of *Self-defence* as long as you can; and if any Mischief happen afterwards and bloody Events ensue, you stand justified by the Laws of God and Man, and may answer for it with Innocence and Honour whether in this World or the next.

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### CONCLUSION.

**T**HUS I think it hath been made abundantly evident both by the Light of Reason and Scripture that the Practice of *Self-Murther* can never be justified, and that 'tis a Crime of heinous and flagrant Guilt both in the Account of God and Man. These immortal Spirits of ours are ordain'd for a Season to dwell in Tabernacles of Flesh and Blood: Curious Tabernacles they are indeed, the Work of inimitable Skill and the Structure of  
a Di-



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a Divine Architect. The Almighty Builder is the great Proprietor of his own Work. We must remember therefore we are but Tenants, and not Lords: We have no Right to demolish these fleshly Buildings at our Pleasure, but are bound to maintain and repair them under all their Totterings and Decays, till they become untenantable and can be sustain'd no longer. If we presume to destroy these earthly Dwellings, or suffer them to fall by our ill Management, we must give a solemn Account of such a guilty Conduct to our great and sovereign Lord. I have therefore endeavoured to manifest in various Instances, that every Step and Tendency toward the *Destruction of ones self* has something highly criminal in it, and partakes of the Guilt of this Sin. We throw our selves willfully out of the hope of the Favour of God when we willfully violate his Laws, and especially in such awful  
and

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and important Instances as relate to Life and Blood.

When we read therefore the Histories of such tragical Occurrences, let us endeavour to make a wise and pious Improvement of those Mischiefs which we cannot prevent. When we hear fresh Tidings weekly of such unhappy Creatures as lay violent Hands on themselves; such as lavish away their Lives by riotous Extravagances or thoughtless Intemperance; such as run along on the Precipices of Death, and the very Edge of Destruction, being hurried on by vain Glory or wild Wagering; such as expose their Blood, their Souls and their eternal Hopes in foolish Contests of Honour, and upon trifling Quarrels; I say, when we hear of these things, let us lift up our Eyes and our Hearts to Heaven and give Thanks to the distinguishing Mercy of God which hath preserved us from these guilty and fatal Mischiefs. Blessed  
bc

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be the Lord that our Names are not written in those dreadful Stories! That we have been secur'd by his Grace from those Temptations, and have been kept thus far walking in the Paths of Life and Peace! and at the same time let us by a devout Wish entrust our Lives and Souls to his keeping. Then let us pity poor Mankind who are subject to the Rage of such criminal and destructive Passions, and who feel the dreadful Effects of them: And with a Spirit of Sacred Compassion, let us offer up an humble Complaint and Prayer to our God, and say, "How long, O Lord, how long shall *Satan* reign and triumph among the Children of Men? How long shall the Adversary of God and Souls make use of the Weakness, the Folly and the Madness of Mankind to hurry them off from the Stage of Life, and to dragg them down to his own dark Dominion?"

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“minions? O *send forth thy Light*  
“*and thy Truth*, and the Power of  
“Divine Love, to rescue and heal  
“a sinful World, and to save Souls  
“from perishing! *Amen.*



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THE END.



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